FRAGILE ENVIRONMENTS IN A DIGITAL AGE: TECHNOLOGIES, AESTHETICS, SOCIALITIES

International Conference

Bohinjska Bistrica, June 26-28, 2025

Programme & Book of Abstracts

Bohinjski Migovec (1896 m)

Pleše (1647 m)

Pršivec (1761 m)

Rušnata glava (1899 m)

Prvi Vogel (2181 m)

Debeli vrh (2390 m)

UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA
Faculty of Arts

DigiFREN
Digital Aestheticization
of Fragile Environments

CHANSE.
COLLABORATION OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN EUROPE

Fragile Environments in a Digital Age: Technologies, Aesthetics, Socialities
International conference

Bohinjska Bistrica, June 26-28, 2025

Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana

International Conference

Fragile Environments in a Digital Age: Technologies, Aesthetics, Socialities

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Programme & Book of Abstracts

Edited by: Sandi Abram, Blaž Bajič, Ana Svetel

Venue:
**Eco Bohinj Hotel, Triglavska cesta 17,
4264 Bohinjska Bistrica, Slovenia**

PROGRAMM

THURSDAY, June 26	
09:30–09:45	Registration
09:45–10:00	Welcome by the organisers
10:00–11:00	Keynote Lecture: Margret Grebowicz: *Mushroom Media: Foraging Through the Fungal Turn* - Chair: Blaž Bajič
11:00–11:30	Break
11:30–13:00	Panel 1 - *Ethics and Aesthetics in Times of Environmental Uncertainty* (Venäläinen, Seppä and Laurén; Brocki; Molek) - Chair: Veronika Zavratnik
13:00–14:30	Lunch
14:30–16:00	Panel 2 - *From Ritual to Representation: Reimagining Place through Artistic Practice* (Katić; Muršič; Sztandara) - Chair: Sanja Đurin
16:00–16:30	Break
16:30–18:00	"*In Laz*": movie screening and discussion with authors (Ledinek Lozej, Peče, Roškar) – Chair: Jaka Repič – Co-organized with The Institute of Slovenian Ethnology (ISE) ZRC SAZU
20:00–21.30	*Sensory Methods in Heritage Research* (Abram, Bajič, Muršič)

FRIDAY, June 27	
09:30–10:30	Keynote Lecture: Blaž Bajič: *How to Think Digital Aestheticization, or Why 'Sensing' Is Not Enough* - Chair: Ana Svetel
10:30–11:00	Break
11:00–12:30	Panel 3 - *Consuming the Alps: Images, Experiences, and the Ethics of Representation* (Yan; Svetel and Zavratnik; Repič) - Chair: Rajko Muršič
12:30–14:00	Lunch
14:00–15:30	Panel 4 - *Seeing with Machines: Visual Infrastructures and the Ethics of Environmental Mediation* (Batista; Struc, Krampl, Valič and Lipovec Čebron; Abram) - Chair: Mario Katić
15:30–16:00	Break
16:00–17:30	Concluding Roundtable: *Sensing, Feeling, Conceiving Nature(s): Insights, Challenges, and Future Directions* (Bajič, Brocki, Đurin, Järviluoma, Venäläinen)
21:00	Henrike von Dewitz: *"Exi(s)tense"*: Exhibition opening, Camp Danica - Chair: Sandi Abram

SATURDAY, June 28	
Until 10:00	Luggage drop-off at hotel lobby + Check-out
10:00–16:00	Field Trip (Ukanc, Savica Waterfall, Vogel Resort, Alpine Dairy Museum)
16:00–16:30	Return to hotel, collect luggage, farewell
16:30	Departure to Ljubljana via Bled and Airport (optional) with vans + cars
18:00	Arrival in Ljubljana

ABSTRACTS

Margret Grebowicz (*Department of Arts, Languages and Philosophy, Missouri University of Science and Technology, United States*)

Mushroom Media: Foraging Through the Fungal Turn

Fungus is the biodegradable material of the future, set to replace plastic. Startups are using mycelium to create everything from coffins to clothing to private homes. Wellness gurus tout the medicinal powers of mushroom extracts, the mental health industry keeps returning to psilocybin to cure anxiety, and bioremediation and mycorestoration clean entire ecosystems of oil spills. As mushrooms mean more and more economic growth and profit, however, foraging as a private, individual activity is less and less encouraged. Normal, curious folks willing to risk some gastric upset are told by the same news that sensationalize the wonders of mycelium to not pick mushrooms because they're all potentially deadly. Influencers raise panics about AI-generated field guides. In Australia government agencies have issued warnings and even official bans on foraging. What exactly is at stake in these ongoing prohibitions, which claim an innocent interest in staying "on the safe side"? What fragilities—both ecological and human—do mushrooms in the media expose, and perhaps even create?

Keywords: mycology, social media, risk, certainty, home

Margret Grebowicz is the author of several books about the intersection of environmental change and social life, including "Rescue Me: On Dogs and Their Humans", "Mountains and Desire: Climbing vs. the End of the World", "Whale Song", and "The National Park to Come". Her recent essays have appeared in the New Yorker, the Atlantic, Sierra Magazine, and the New Republic, and she is the founding editor of the Practices series for Duke University Press. She is Maxwell C. Weiner Distinguished Professor of the Humanities at Missouri University of Science and Technology, USA, where she teaches philosophy and leads a public scholarship network.

Juhana Venäläinen, Tiina Seppä and Kirsi Laurén
(School of Humanities, University of Eastern Finland, Finland)

Deterritorialised Care: Infrastructures, Ethics, and Aesthetics of Hiking in Protected Nature

This presentation examines how infrastructures of care mediate human-environment relationships in two protected mire areas in Finland: Patvinsuo National Park and Viiankiaapa Mire Reserve. Through exploring diverse on-site and off-site practices, it explores how material and socio-cultural infrastructures shape the ethics and aesthetics of care in ecologically fragile environments.

Patvinsuo illustrates the intertwining of contemporary discourses of well-being with the longer cultural imaginaries of "pristine nature" as a destination for self-care and renewal. With modest visitor numbers, physical infrastructures of care, such as duckboards that guide visitors through open landscapes, effectively balance ecological integrity with contemplative hiking experiences. The physical guidance is complemented by the Hiking Etiquette, a code-of-conduct promoted by Metsähallitus (the state-owned enterprise managing the sites) by physical signs and social media activities. Simultaneously, the ordinary ethics of hiking in protected areas is shaped through everyday hikers who share their trips online or discuss their thoughts with other visitors when stopping at a campfire.

Viiankiaapa, in contrast, faces existential uncertainty due to proposed mining beneath its protected landscape. While actual mining has not begun, extensive test drilling has spurred activism and digital advocacy, emphasising ecological risks and potential threats to conservation across Europe. This awareness permeates the experiences of visiting Viiankiaapa and incites nuanced or more explicit care practices that are situated, mediated and/or reflected in the online realm.

Drawing on Joan Tronto's analysis of the "phases" of care (caring about, caring for, and caring-with) and Maria Puig de la Bellacasa's speculative ethics, we argue that care in fragile environments is a multilayered, relational, and contested phenomenon. Approaching care as an amalgam of infrastructures, ethics, and aesthetics reveals protected areas as assemblages of interwoven on-site and digital practices, negotiating tensions between ecological fragility and socio-cultural imaginaries.

Juhana Venäläinen (PhD, Title of Docent) is Associate Professor of Cultural Studies at the University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu. His research areas include sensory studies, cultural economy, transformations of work, discourses of economic change, and everyday economic moralities. Currently, Venäläinen leads a research project on "Post-ownership as an interpretation and experience of economic change" (2022–2025, funded by the Kone Foundation) as well as the research team at the University of Eastern Finland in the DigiFREN project (Digital Aestheticization of Fragile Environment).

Tiina Seppä (PhD, Title of Docent) is a Senior Researcher at the University of Eastern Finland, cultural studies. Currently, she works in the DigiFREN project. Her research interests include the folklore collecting and constructing project, colonial processes, and immaterial conditions (such as affections and economy) in folklore collecting process and, recent years, interspecies relations in folklore and human environment relationships.

Kirsi Laurén (PhD, Title of Docent) is a Senior Lecturer of Cultural Heritage at the University of Oulu. She conducts research as part of the University of Eastern Finland's DigiFREN project, which investigates the digital aestheticization of fragile environments. Her research interests include human environmental studies, memory studies and cultural heritage studies.

Marcin Brocki *(Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Jagiellonian University, Poland)*

Visual Narratives of Ecological Crisis: A Semiotic Analysis of the 2022 Oder River Poisoning

In the summer of 2022, the poisoning of the Oder River resulted in one of the most severe ecological disasters in Central Europe, sparking widespread public concern, media coverage, and government debates. This paper explores the ways in which visual narratives and digital media - photographs, videos and user-generated digital content - framed, constructed and communicated visual narratives of environmental fragility, influencing local communities and wider stewardship efforts. A hybrid online/offline ethnographic approach, with walking methods as the core data collection technique, was used to gather the diverse corpus of images and social media posts. A semiotic approach was used to identify recurring visual motifs that symbolise ecological crisis, scientific authority and collective responsibility. These motifs circulate on social platforms, intensifying 'spectacles of change' that galvanise public discourse and cross-border policy-making. The findings highlight how digital imagery shapes emotional and cognitive engagement with ecological crises, highlighting the role of visual media in mobilising activism and influencing policy responses. The study shows how digital aesthetics transform ecological perceptions and social dynamics.

Keywords: ecological crisis, digital media, semiotic analysis, environmental stewardship

Marcin Brocki is an associate professor at Jagiellonian University, Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology (Krakow, Poland). His research interests revolve around the theory and methodology of anthropological research, semiotics, community studies, social and economic transformation, anthropology of the body and the social construction of landscape. He conducted his fieldwork in diverse sites in southern Poland (on transition and society and rapid industrial development and its impact on local community) and did anthropological surveys in Zimbabwe (on "informal social protection systems") and Ethiopia (on rapid change). He is currently conducting research as part of the Chanse Digi-FREN project.

Nadia Molek *(Faculty of Organisation Studies, Slovenia)*

AI, Ethics, and Sustainability in the Digitalization of Fragile Tourism Environments: A Case Study of Airbnb in the Riviera Maya and Cancun

Since its arrival in 2010, Airbnb has transformed the local tourism economy, aligning with Sustainable Development Goal 8 by fostering economic growth and employment. However, recent platform updates, especially the 2022 algorithmic changes colloquially termed "#Airbbust", have generated substantial disruptions. These include reduced visibility for established hosts, unequal booking distribution, and growing concerns regarding data privacy, platform dependency, and transparency in AI decision-making. This paper aims to explore the ethical and sustainability implications of emerging digital technologies—particularly artificial intelligence (AI)—within fragile tourism environments, focusing on the short-term rental market in Riviera Maya and Cancun, Mexico. Drawing from anthropological perspectives, digital ethnography, semi-structured interviews, and case study methodology, the research investigates the socio-economic and ethical impacts of AI integration into sharing economy platforms such as Airbnb.

Findings highlight a polarized landscape: while some actors embrace AI tools to optimize their business models, others express apprehension over the opacity of algorithms and potential ethical violations. Importantly, the study reveals the absence of robust regulatory frameworks in Mexico, which exacerbates vulnerabilities in already fragile socio-technical ecosystems. The paper argues that the increasing digitalization of tourism infrastructures necessitates a more equitable, transparent, and inclusive integration of AI. It also calls for a transdisciplinary effort to ensure that AI development aligns with ethical and sustainable principles, particularly in peripheral and ecologically sensitive regions.

By emphasizing the co-constitutive relationship between digital technologies and society, this work contributes to ongoing debates on Sustainable AI and digital governance, urging for the design of socio-technical systems that prioritize justice, inclusivity, and human autonomy in contexts of accelerated technological change.

Nadia Molek is a PhD in Socio-anthropology and a lecturer at the Faculty of Organizational Studies in Novo mesto, Slovenia. Her research bridges anthropology, digital transformation, and organizational studies with a focus on sustainability, migration, and identity. Through interdisciplinary and ethnographic methods, she explores how technological innovations impact social practices, particularly in tourism and education. Her work addresses the ethical challenges of digitalization and promotes the integration of bottom-up perspectives in policy-making and innovation design.

Mario Katić (*Department of Ethnology and Anthropology, University of Zadar, Croatia*)

Aesthetic Re-interpretation of Religious Practice in Fragile Environment – Mirila of Velebit Mountain in Croatia

The practice of erecting mirila formed part of funeral rites common throughout the north-east Adriatic hinterland up to the mid-twentieth century and persist in some locations even today. The deceased person, lying in a coffin or wrapped in a shroud, would be laid on the ground in a specific place on the way to the graveyard. The bearers would then place two stones, one at the head and the other at the feet of the corpse. After a short prayer, the procession would continue to the graveyard, where the body would be interred. After the interment, a row of stone slabs would be placed between the two markers at the resting-place. This was known as a mirilo (pl. mirila). It was usually located on the route between the deceased person's house and the graveyard. With the changes in everyday life this funerary practice in focus found itself within two Croatian national parks Velebit (1999) and Paklenica (1949), respectively, and became a protected element – cultural heritage – of the fragile natural environment. In contemporary times the region became attractive for tourists, hikers, visitors that are experiencing and representing the environment and its elements in diverse ways through different digital media. In this paper I will focus on the artistic aesthetic re-interpretation of religious practice and how it influenced the process of heritage making, everyday life in a fragile environment, and its digital afterlife. With artistic aesthetization mirila became a tourist attraction, theatrical performance, motive for animated and documentary movies, object of representation in both physical and virtual museums, and a part of emblematic symbols of national parks in virtual worlds. Ontological status of heritage objects depends on complex practices of authentication and 'aesthetics of persuasion' through which heritage 'is appropriated and embodied in lived experience' (Van de Port and Meyer 2018, p. 6). Following these ideas, I will discuss the mechanism of aesthetic appropriations of mirila and the construction of their authenticity within the already constructed environment.

Keywords: aesthetic appropriation, authenticity, artistic re-interpretation, fragile environment, cultural heritage, velebit mountain, mirila

Mario Katić is an associate professor at the University of Zadar, Department of Ethnology and Anthropology. He is doing research on pilgrimages and death practices in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Ireland and France. Recently he co-edited Approaching Pilgrimage: Methodological Issues Involved in Researching Routes, Sites, and Practices (Routledge, 2023), and he was a guest editor of thematic issue of Geoadria journal titled: Spatializing sedimentations and erosions of time in urban landscapes (2024)

Rajko Muršič *(Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia)*

Multimodal Aesthetization of Place: Visual, Aural as well as Poetic and Narrational

When we consider aesthetization of environments, we usually expect images to characterize and emotionally charge specific places. In some cases, it may become their sounding, or silence. Rivers' flow is typically more felt than heard, but riverbanks, as well as river crosses and bridges are places of threat. It was very common in the past to relate places and stories, especially in folklore, mythology and vernacular religion. It seems at first sight that narrations related to places are nowadays gone. It is indeed less expected to observe poetry as the main source of the aesthetization of place.

It is the waterfall Savica above Bohinjsko jezero that became the place of Prešeren's poem Krst pri Savici (Baptism at Savica), where he wrote a story of the origins of Slovenian nationhood. Slovenian visitors of the place cannot experience the place without remembering the poem.

In recent digital aesthetization, its main focus is not experience, especially not in its visual part, but reflexive narcissism. Selfies made at the spot are a medium of marking the space with augmented setting. Nevertheless, other kinds of anesthetization, especially related to storytelling, survived as well.

At the waterfalls Savica (above Bohinjsko jezero) and Rinka (in Logarska dolina), the place is inhabited by ghosts, spirits, memories and representations. The author will discuss intermediate dimensions in aesthetization of places at the waterfalls of Savica and Rinka as well as their relationship to the river Mura around Trate.

Keywords: aesthetization, poetic imagination, space and place, fragile environments, rivers, water

Rajko Muršič is professor of ethnology/cultural anthropology at the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology. His research focuses on music, sound, theories of culture, epistemology, urban anthropology, methodology of anthropological research, sensory studies, digital anthropology, the use of algorithms, AI, etc.

Magdalena Sztandara *(Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Jagiellonian University, Poland)*

Toward an Ecological Imagination: Telling the River in the Anthropocene

The environmental catastrophe that struck the Oder a few years ago has left the river eerily quiet. While nature is slowly recovering and reversing some of the damage—non-human creatures are beginning to return—what has truly silenced the Oder is the absence of human voices. Hardly anyone comes to the river now — to experience it, to see it, to hear it. According to its defenders, guardians, caretakers, artists, and activists closely connected to the Oder, this is one of the greatest tragedies of the disaster.

These individuals are working to restore people's presence and relationship with the river by engaging with its images and sounds; they are telling the river. Their efforts range from classical representations (or even „aesthetic inventories") of natural forms to experimental artistic practices that propose new ways of interacting with the environment. They aim to revive the 'imaginary'; the efforts to see and hear the river lead to meaningful understandings of how to perceive it, negotiations of what should be perceived, and what actions might follow.

By creating works that respond to the challenges of the Anthropocene, they seek to bridge aesthetic discourse with environmental, social, and ethical discourses. But how can images and sounds communicate knowledge about environmental change—not just inform us, but open a space for conscious reflection on its causes, effects, and interconnections? Do we truly see and hear the river worlds and everything these images and sounds convey? More importantly, do we understand what lies behind them? Can they become extra-visual and extra-sonic narratives—vehicles for a new 'ecological imagination'?

Keywords: environmental catastrophe, Oder River, ecological imagination

Magdalena Sztandara is an anthropologist working at the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. Her research interests include issues of performative ethnography, visual anthropology, feminist ethnography, methodology of ethnographic research, and teaching anthropology.

Miha Peče, Špela Ledinek Lozej, Saša Roškar *(Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia)*

"*V Lazu*", "*In Laz*" – movie screening and discussion with authors

The high mountain pasture *V Lazu* is populated by a small yet diverse community that brings this remote mountain basin back to life during the summer. The main protagonist of the film is herdsman and cheese maker Gregor Gartner. We observe his daily work with the cattle and at the cheese dairy. His daughter Lucija and her boyfriend Sašo Novak, who is in the alp for the first time, often lend him a hand. Gartner's hut is an informal centre of the mountain social life, since it also serves as a mountain cabin for hikers and tourists who are in need of a rest and refreshments before continuing their trail. Whereas Gregor has in the alp a dozen of milking cows and some heifers, Anica Kovačič, who lives more remotely, at the mere edge of the alp, has a flock of goats. The community of Laz concludes with the long-term tenants of the shepherd's huts, who are big mountain lovers. Among them we meet Mirjana Turel, her son Bor Turel, and Tatjana Marušič.

After the movie screening, there will be a discussion about the film, the Bohinj alps and Laz — an alpine pasture in the heart of the Triglav National Park, and all changes since film was made

Keywords: ethnology, dairying, cheesemaking, mountain pastures

Miha Peče is active in the field of ethnographic film and research data, employed at the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. In the past he dabbled in experimental film and multimedia projects. Currently, his main role is data stewardship, but he's also engaged in the organization of ethnographic film festivals.

Špela Ledinek Lozej is an ethnologist and works as a research associate at the Institute of Ethnology of the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Her research focuses on heritage-making and Alpine husbandry; currently she leads a multidisciplinary research programme "Heritage on the Margins".

Saša Roškar is an ethnologist working at the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, Kranj Regional Unit. As a conservator, she covers part of the Gorenjska region, with a special focus on the culture of the built environment in the Alps.

"Walkshop" led by Sandi Abram, Blaž Bajič and Rajko Muršič
(Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia)

Sensory Methods in Heritage Research

This participatory "walkshop" explores how sensory methods can be used to investigate and interpret heritage sites and environments. Participants will engage in one of the three guided walks—sound walk, sensory walk, and digital walk—each designed to highlight different dimensions of embodied and mediated heritage experience. These methods offer tools for engaging with both tangible and intangible aspects of heritage, including atmosphere, memory, materiality, and change.

Sound Walk: Participants will be invited to attune their ears to the heritage soundscape. In a rural and historical setting, the group will explore how the acoustic environment reflects cultural practices, temporal layers, and shifts in the use and meaning of place. From church bells to traffic noise, from echoes in old courtyards to voices in marketplaces, participants will reflect on how sound contributes to the lived experience and interpretation of heritage.

Sensory Walk: Aiming to encompass a broader range of sensory inputs—smell, touch, temperature, movement, and spatial orientation, participants will be encouraged to engage with the textures, materials, and atmospheres of the heritage environment. This approach emphasizes the importance of embodied memory, affect, and multisensory perception in connecting with the cultural and historical significance of places, how their meaning are made, contested, and re-made.

Digital Walk: Participants will use mobile technologies—such as smartphones for photography, audio recording, or geolocation—to document their sensory encounters with heritage sites. This exercise opens up questions about how digital tools mediate our understanding of heritage and how they can be critically employed in both research and public engagement. Participants will consider how digital traces can complement or distort lived experiences of heritage.

The walks will be followed by a moderated group discussion inviting participants to share their impressions and consider the methodological potential

of sensory approaches in heritage research. The workshop aims to raise awareness of the complex ways in which heritage, in it different guises (from hegemonic to contentious heritage) is perceived, experienced, and interpreted, offering a hands-on introduction to embodied and participatory methods in the field.

Duration: 90 minutes (including a short introduction, three thematic walking sessions, and a moderated group discussion).

Blaž Bajič *(Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia)*

How to Think Digital Aestheticization, or Why 'Sensing' Is Not Enough

The use of digital media and technologies has, among other things, profoundly affected how people engage with, perceive, and represent the environments of their everyday lives. This lecture outlines possible theoretical perspectives through which we can understand these transformative processes. Drawing on cultural anthropology, media studies, and philosophy, it conceptualizes digital aestheticization as an ongoing interplay between (apparently) universalized environmental imaginaries and the (ostensibly) particularities of lived experience. Furthermore, it highlights the implications of digital aestheticization for the social understanding of ecological fragility and resilience in a time of accelerated environmental and societal change.

Keywords: digital aestheticization, environmental imaginaries, media and perception, ecological fragility, cultural theory

Blaž Bajič is an Assistant Professor and a Researcher at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, University of Ljubljana. Lately, he co-edited a number of volumes, including Sensory Environmental Relationships (Vernon Books, 2023), which was recognised with the Outstanding Research Achievement Award by the Scientific Institute of the Faculty of Arts.

Liling Yan *(University of Cape Town, South Africa)*

"Corona Mountaineering" and the Trivialization of Fragile Environments: The Impact of Digital Trends on Outdoor Practices in Slovenia

Pandemic-related closures of gyms, indoor facilities, and ski resorts contributed to a marked increase in mountaineering activity in Slovenia. This trend was further reinforced by government initiatives that encouraged outdoor recreation and introduced tourism vouchers to support domestic travel. Social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook also played a significant role in amplifying interest in mountain environments. However, the emergence of the term "corona mountaineering," as articulated by interview participants, reflects growing concerns about the influx of inexperienced hikers and the associated rise in rescue operations, posing challenges for mountain safety and resource management.

The phenomenon of "corona mountaineering" illustrates a complex interplay between digitalized representations of nature, local community dynamics, and environmental stewardship in fragile alpine settings. This paper examines how social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook contributed to the democratization of outdoor spaces, while simultaneously fostering concerns about the trivialization of responsible outdoor practices and the sustainability of mountain landscapes.

Methodologically, this essay synthesizes qualitative insights gathered from semi-structured interviews with Slovenian hikers, climbers, authors, and publishers. These in-depth conversations directly address the observed changes in outdoor practices following pandemic restrictions, the influence of digital platforms, and the impact of governmental policies. Interviewees shared their observations on increased visitor numbers in popular mountain spots, the potential for social media to incentivize image-driven behaviour over safety and environmental consciousness, and the challenges posed by individuals new to mountain environments. By grounding the analysis in these varied experiences and concerns, this paper offers a compelling critical assessment of the long-term implications of "corona mountaineering" for the sustainability, safety, and stewardship of Slovenia's valued mountain landscapes.

Liling Yan is a PhD Candidate in Anthropology at the University of Cape Town and an Erasmus+ Exchange Researcher at the University of Ljubljana. Her doctoral research, Women on the Trails: Experiences, Barriers, and Empowerment, explores gendered experiences in mountaineering, especially hiking, with fieldwork conducted in Slovenia and South Africa. Her work examines how women navigate challenges, build communities, and find empowerment through outdoor activities.

Ana Svetel, Veronika Zavratnik *(Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia)*

Tasteful Valleys: Representations of "Homemade" and "Traditional" Cuisine in Solčavsko

The paper addresses representations of "homemade" and "traditional" cuisine, which form an important part of the tourist offer in the Logar Valley and the wider Solčava region, a popular tourist destination in the Kamnik-Savinja Alps. The emphasis on what is portrayed as traditional recipes and locally sourced ingredients, as well as on food and food practices associated with high-altitude farming, is linked to ideas of Alpine aesthetics, pristine nature, authenticity, and sustainability. Images of such tasteful "harmonies of the three valleys" are disseminated through printed publications, but nowadays especially via digital media and social networks, where they are algorithmically mediated.

We build on the notion of Alpine food domesticity that encompasses not only the valorization of local ingredients and traditional recipes but also the broader affective and aesthetic dimensions of food, which reinforce imaginaries of an unspoiled Alpine way of life. Through concrete examples of visual and textual curation of "homemade" and "traditional" cuisine in the Logar Valley, we analyze the aesthetic and affective categories within which such representations of food are embedded.

Keywords: food, tradition, sustainable, agriculture, Alps

Ana Svetel is an Assistant Professor and a Researcher at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, University of Ljubljana. Sensory Environmental Relationships (Vernon Press, 2023), the volume she co-edited with Blaž Bajič, was recognised with the Outstanding Research Achievement Award by the Scientific Institute of the Faculty of Arts. Her research interests lie in human-environment relations, particularly in the anthropological studies of weather, light, and seasonality.

Veronika Zavratnik is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, University of Ljubljana. Her research focuses on material culture, handicrafts, and the environment. She holds a PhD in anthropology based on a study of footwear in everyday life and is editor-in-chief of the journal Svetovi/Worlds.

Jaka Repič *(Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia)*

Lens and Landscape: The Changing Aesthetics of Mountain Pastoralism in Slovenian Alps

This presentation explores how mountain landscapes and human relationships with the mountain environment, especially in the context of pastoralism, have been represented in photography over the past century. Focusing on the Bohinj region in northwestern Slovenia, with comparative examples from other Alpine areas in the country, it examines how visual portrayals have both reflected and shaped evolving perceptions of mountain life. Mountain pastoralism has historically been linked to diverse notions, from backwardness, tradition, and heritage; to, more recently associated values such as ingenuity, nature, locality, and sustainable farming and life with nature. These shifting discourses are embedded in visual culture, where photography serves not only as a medium of documentation, but also as a tool for aesthetic engagement and environmental meaning-making.

The presentation will analyse dominant modes and genres of mountain photography in Slovenia, highlighting key themes, technological development, and changing aestheticization of the landscape. Photography is a technological tool that not only enables representation of landscape, but allows and shapes aesthetic experiences of, and engagement with, the environment.

Keywords: pastoralism, Alps, aestheticization, photography, mountains

Dr Jaka Repič is an Associate Professor of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. At the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, he teaches methodological courses as well as courses related to urban anthropology, anthropology of violence, migration, and the ethnology of Australia and Oceania. His research interests include transnational migration, the Slovenian diaspora in Argentina, the anthropology of art and, more recently, anthropological research of mass graves. He has published two monographs, coedited several edited volumes and regularly publishes scholarly journals.

Carlos A. Batista *(Department of Anthropology, Columbia University, United States)*

Sensing Nature, Materializing Populism: Remote Sensing and Underground Exploration in Quintana Roo, Mexico

The construction of the touristic Mayan Train in Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula has inspired a series of protests against deforestation, the contamination of the aquifer, and the destruction of archaeological remains. Using ethnographic work conducted with activists and ecologists in the Mexican Caribbean during 2022-2024, this paper examines the remote sensing of charismatic species and the underground exploration of the caves located directly under the train to suggest that mediation plays a dual role in the unearthing of environmental catastrophe. While images of jaguars walking across the rainforest, of iron pillars shedding rust into the aquifer, and of blind eel swimming in underground water circulated broadly as part of activists' efforts to document catastrophe, they were met with disbelief on behalf of people who supported the government's plans to build the train. I center on activists' experiences of not being believed, or of being accused of saying things that are untrue, as part of an exploration of populist mediation. The mediation of the Mayan Train's environmental catastrophe, I argue, can only be understood through an exploration of the mediation of the populist message of the left-wing National Regeneration Movement. With the government's message centering on how much good the train would produce, its effective invocation of populist affect sidelined the activists' claims and made them seem like gibberish. Building on work on the anthropology of infrastructure (Anand and Appel 2018; Fennell 2015; Knox and Harvey 2015), the anthropology of mediation (Hirschkind, de Abreu, and Caduff 2017), and the anthropology of populism (Cody 2023; Sánchez 2016), my paper argues that the activists' message and the government's message produced a particular middle-ground that circulated broadly throughout publics in both Quintana Roo and Mexico as a whole. This middle-ground was neither in favor nor against the train but rather rested on confusion about what was truly right.

Keywords: infrastructure, remote sensing, charismatic species, populism, nature

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Vulnerabilities through Digital Tools for Disaster Preparedness

When waters, rivers and streams flooded two thirds of Slovenia in August 2023, communities, structures of authorities, and responders turned to a range of tools to manage the crisis. This paper explores how digital and analog tools were used before, during, and after the disaster. As part of the international research project Sonar-Cities, conducted in six European cities (Ljubljana, Zagreb, Vienna, Udine, Stockholm, and Groningen), we are researching the disaster preparedness of European cities. Through ethnography and critical/discursive analysis of the tools we will present solidarity practices that arose (or are absent) in natural disasters. As Eriksen and Mendes write, "it is people at the local level who are actually coping with or adapting to change" (2022: 17) we will shed light on local ways of coping with the crisis through solidary practices that interlocutor have shared with us as a way of improving preparedness, response, and recovery in possible future crises.

In the paper, we will also discuss vulnerabilities that we identified in analysed tools for various crises (e.g., COVID-19, fires, earthquakes, heatwaves, floods) and show how the creators of the tools define vulnerability and how they see it in the connection with humans, animals and their environment. We will present some examples, such as tools that were made for the cross-border cooperation, interactive tools for preparedness, multilingual handbook, radio alerts, color alert system, mailing list for communication and finally, relation between the siren and the phone alert system. We will present the content, format, and dissemination of tools. Our focus question will be on how and why digital and interactive tools are less commonly used among a wide population, as well as how to make them more sustainable and comprehensive to ensure that emergency preparedness is useful and widely recognized among the population.

Keywords: tools for disasters and health crises, floods, COVID-19, vulnerability, solidarity

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Digital Technologies and Contemporary Hunting Practices

Based on an ethnographic study of contemporary hunters in Solčavsko (Slovenia), the paper examines how digital technologies and digitally-assisted hunting practices are understood and negotiated in a fragile Alpine environment, and the ways in which they affect hunters' identities, practices, and perceptions. While "wild killing" (Marvin 2006) is commonly understood as the embodiment of a "true" hunting ethic and "authentic" experience that relies on sensory and bodily knowledge of the natural environment and wild animals, the use of digital technologies at times complicates such perceptions. Digitally-assisted hunting, which incorporates advanced technologies (e.g. night vision binoculars/cameras, thermal devices, smart digital rifle scopes, photo camera traps), is sometimes viewed (and moralized upon) as an inauthentic practice. Yet in other specific cases, particularly when hunting certain species, its use becomes acceptable and tolerated even though it undermines and/or eliminates what Ortega y Gasset (1972) identified as the essence of hunting: the element of chance, the animal's opportunity to escape the hunter.

Keywords: digital technologies, contemporary hunting, Slovenia

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Sensing, Feeling, Conceiving Nature(s): Insights, Challenges, and Future Directions

This concluding roundtable offers a space for shared reflection on the themes, questions, and trajectories explored throughout the conference. Bringing together researchers involved in a multi-year collaboration across diverse fields—from digital aesthetics and environmental humanities to anthropology and cultural studies—each speaker will offer a brief intervention reflecting on their experiences, insights, and evolving perspectives and challenges that arose along the way. Rather than closing with definitive conclusions, the roundtable invites dialogue and open-ended thinking—serving as a gesture of collective reflection, a moment of synthesis, and a stepping stone toward future inquiries.

Blaž Bajič is an Assistant Professor and a Researcher at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, University of Ljubljana. Lately, he co-edited a number of volumes, including Sensory Environmental Relationships (Vernon Books, 2023), which was recognised with the Outstanding Research Achievement Award by the Scientific Institute of the Faculty of Arts.

Marcin Brocki is an associate professor at Jagiellonian University, Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology (Krakow, Poland). His research interests revolve around the theory and methodology of anthropological research, semiotics, community studies, social and economic transformation, anthropology of the body and the social construction of landscape. He conducted his fieldwork in diverse sites in southern Poland (on transition and society and rapid industrial development and its impact on local community) and did anthropological surveys in Zimbabwe (on "informal social protection systems") and Ethiopia (on rapid change). He is currently conducting research as part of the Chanse Digi-FREN project.

Sanja Đurin is a cultural anthropologist and research associate at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research in Zagreb, Croatia. She holds degrees in philosophy and general linguistics from the University of Zagreb and earned her M.A. and Ph.D. in cultural anthropology from the Institutum Studiorum Humanitatis in Ljubljana. Her research spans gender, class, migration, and minority identities, with fieldwork conducted in Germany, Chile, and Argentina. She is the author of Croats Are a Brand in Chile: Discourses on Success and Belonging (2020). Since 2019, she has been involved in outdoor and leisure studies and

currently leads the Croatian team in the international project Digital Aestheti-cization of Fragile Environments.

Helmi Järviluoma *(born 1960) is a Finnish sound, music, and cultural scholar and writer. She is a Professor Emerita of Cultural Studies at the University of Eastern Finland. As sensory and soundscape ethnographer, Järviluoma has developed the mobile method of sensobiographic walking. Her research and art spans the fields of sensory remembering, qualitative methodology (especially regarding gender), environmental cultural studies, sound art and fiction writing. In 2016, she received an Advanced Grant from the European Research Council ERC, in order to study Sensory Transformations and Transgenerational Environmental Relationships, 1950–2020 SENSOTRA in the three European cities of Ljubljana, Turku and Brighton. Among her 180 publications, Gender and Qualitative Methods (2003/2010) continues to draw attention. She has written and directed altogether six radio features for Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE. The Finnish Union of University Professors selected Helmi Järviluoma as professor of the year 2019 in Finland, and 2018 Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, invited her as a member.*

Juhana Venäläinen *(PhD, Title of Docent) is Associate Professor of Cultural Studies at the University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu. His research areas include sensory studies, cultural economy, transformations of work, discourses of economic change, and everyday economic moralities. Currently, Venäläinen leads a research project on "Post-ownership as an interpretation and experience of economic change" (2022–2025, funded by the Kone Foundation) as well as the research team at the University of Eastern Finland in the DigiFREN project (Digital Aestheticization of Fragile Environment).*

Henrike von Dewitz *(independent anthropologist and artist)*

"Exi(s)tense" - Exhibition opening, Camp Danica

The site-specific video installation Exi(s)tense is composed by a series of video art works made by Henrike von Dewitz. It pretends to visually interact with the place in which it is displayed as an open air-projection. The work is made upon footage produced by the artist along many years and in many countries. This source material deals with hazardous and unexpected encounters with natural phenomena in daily life contexts: animals, the elements of nature in action, the subtle movements of organisms everywhere. By cutting, editing and manipulating the footage, von Dewitz creates video compositions of almost-abstract, almost-surreal, almost-geometrical appearance, which nevertheless never fail to refer to the original event, the choreography staged by some caterpillars or an insect's colony, for instance, which triggered the creative process.

Henrike von Dewitz (Germany, 1981) is an anthropologist, documentary filmmaker and visual artist. She exhibited her video installations, documentary films and photography in festivals, museums, galleries and public spaces in various cities in Germany, France, Uruguay and Slovenia. She leads an international video art collective, directs documentary film cycles and works as a translator, German teacher and film festival selector.