



PHD PROGRAMME BOOKLET

SOCIOLOGY
and PSYCHOSOCIAL STUDIES

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION
and MANAGEMENT



| SASS



WITH A CLEAR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

WELCOME!

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the doctoral programmes at the School of Advanced Social Studies in Nova Gorica. Entering a doctoral programme is a significant step in your academic and professional journey, representing the highest level of university education and a commitment to independent scientific inquiry, intellectual responsibility, and the advancement of knowledge.

At SASS, we offer doctoral studies in sociology, psychosocial studies, communication, and management, designed to address complex contemporary social phenomena through interdisciplinary and research-oriented approaches. The programmes combine strong theoretical foundations with advanced methodological training and individual research, enabling candidates to make original scientific contributions and engage with current academic and societal challenges in an international environment.

Doctoral study at SASS is conceived as a highly rewarding and academically enriching process of scholarly development. It encourages critical thinking, methodological rigour, and innovative research, while promoting close cooperation with experienced mentors and active participation in the academic community. Through this process, candidates gradually acquire the competencies required for high-level scientific, professional, and leadership roles in a complex and rapidly changing world.

A central element of doctoral education is the mentor–candidate relationship. The choice of supervisor or co-supervisor is therefore one of the most important decisions in the early phase of study. Appropriate academic guidance not only supports the successful completion of the dissertation, but also shapes the candidate's research profile and long-term scholarly development. To assist in this process, this booklet presents potential supervisors and co-supervisors involved in the doctoral programmes at the School of Advanced Social Studies, together with their research areas, academic experience, and fields of expertise. The diversity of disciplines reflects the interdisciplinary nature of contemporary social sciences and offers candidates the opportunity to develop their research within a stimulating and supportive academic environment. I warmly invite you to explore this publication and trust that it will serve as a valuable guide in establishing academic cooperation, which forms the foundation of successful doctoral work.

By joining our doctoral programmes, you become part of an international academic community committed to excellence, responsibility, and the creation of new knowledge. I wholeheartedly encourage you to approach this journey with curiosity, perseverance, and academic integrity, and to see doctoral study not only as the completion of a dissertation, but as the formation of your own scientific identity and contribution to society.

I wish you a successful, inspiring, and intellectually enriching doctoral journey at SASS.

Prof. dr. Simona Kukovič
Vice Dean for Science and Research



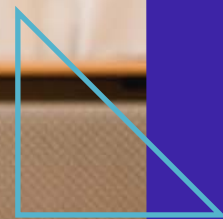
DOCTORAL STUDIES

Programmes at SASS combine scientific excellence, social responsibility, and personal intellectual growth.

With strong support from renowned mentors, openness to international collaboration, and access to diverse research opportunities, we enable you to develop a doctoral thesis that goes beyond academic boundaries and becomes your original scientific contribution with real social and practical dimensions.

At SASS, we have an outstanding support system for doctoral students. We do not only teach about current academic topics — we motivate, empower, and encourage students in developing their own capabilities. During the preparation of the doctoral proposal and dissertation, students are not left on their own; instead, we guide them step by step towards achieving excellence. We also have a well-established tutoring system.

We place great emphasis on fostering networking among students, and doctoral candidates additionally have the opportunity to take part in various extracurricular activities where they can deepen their knowledge and develop new skills (for example, the Summer Leadership Academy, summer schools, winter camps, etc.).

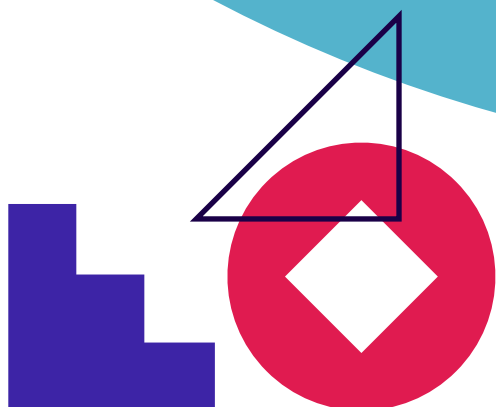


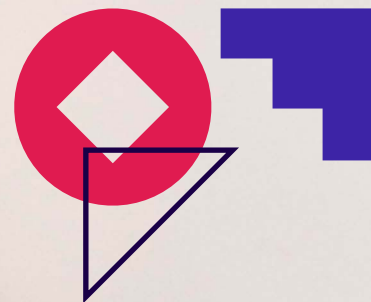
WHY CHOOSE A DOCTORAL STUDY PROGRAMME AT SASS?

- Individual mentorship and a personalised approach
- Possibility of writing the dissertation in a foreign language
- Opportunities for international collaboration and research mobility
- Strong research support (including SASS research groups)
- Connection with current social issues and real-world contexts
- Opportunities to participate in research projects
- Possibility of scientific and professional publications
- Opportunities to take part in international conferences and academic panels
- Accessible, well-organised studies with the option of remote participation with Study+ Support.

Flexible Organisation

- Lectures and consultations are organised in concentrated blocks, making it possible to study alongside employment.
- Hybrid approach with Study+ Support: many sessions and consultations are conducted online.
- Individual consultation schedules: mentors adapt to the workflow of the dissertation according to the candidate's preferences.
- Possibility to submit and defend the doctoral dissertation in English.





**PHD PROGRAMME
SOCIOLOGY AND
PSYCHOSOCIAL
STUDIES**

BRIDGING DEEP THEORY WITH REAL-WORLD IMPACT

The world faces complex challenges that require more than just surface-level observations. This programme is designed for those who want to master the intersection of individual experience and societal structures, becoming co-creators of progress and critical reflection.

Why This Programme?

- **Independent Research Mastery:** Lead original scientific inquiries and create innovative methodologies to solve complex societal challenges.
- **Complex Phenomena Analysis:** Dissect the intricate layers of social, political, and psychosocial dynamics with a systemic perspective.
- **Psychosocial Insight:** Explore the relationship between individual mental health, social cognition, and broader behavioural processes.
- **Knowledge for Change:** Produce research that contributes meaningfully to both academic theory and the development of professional policies and practices.

KNOWLEDGE +

Expertise in contemporary sociology, political processes, and psychosocial studies.

APPLICABILITY +

Grounded in individual research, project participation, and collaboration with top institutions.

FLEXIBILITY +

Weekend delivery (Fridays & Saturdays) with the Study+ Support package for flexible remote access.

Career Trajectory & Strategic Impact

Graduates are prepared for leadership across diverse professional landscapes:

- **Academia & Research:** Essential credentials for academic and pedagogical roles within higher education and international research institutes.
- **Governance & Policy:** Senior advisory positions in public administration, local government, and institutions focused on multi-level governance.
- **Civil Society & NGOs:** Leading transformative initiatives within non-governmental organisations and driving social advocacy and progress.
- **Corporate Strategy & HR:** Strategic innovation in the private sector, focusing on market analysis, organizational development, and human resources.
- **Mental Health & Analysis:** Expert roles in psychosocial fields, strategic analysis, and the development of professional intervention strategies.

**PHD PROGRAMME
STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATION
AND MANAGEMENT**

LEADING STRATEGIC INNOVATION IN A DYNAMIC INFORMATION SOCIETY

Master the intersection of leadership, communication, and science. This programme is designed for ambitious professionals ready to develop original research and strategic solutions for the complex organizational challenges of the digital age.

Why This Programme?

- **Scientific Pathway:** Create your own research focus under the guidance of expert mentors within a structured seminar framework.
- **Strategic Competences:** Navigate the complexities of public opinion, political discourse, and crisis communication with analytical precision.
- **Managerial Excellence:** Develop advanced insights into organisational culture, leadership, and strategic management.
- **Global Academic Integration:** Connect with national and international experts, participate in high-level projects, and publish impactful scientific contributions.

KNOWLEDGE +

Expertise in communication theories, public opinion, crisis management, and leadership.

APPLICABILITY +

Development of practical research approaches, integrating theory with real-world challenges in authentic environments.

FLEXIBILITY +

Weekend lectures (Fridays & Saturdays) with the Study+ Support package (recordings and online exams).

Career Trajectory & Strategic Impact

Graduates are prepared for top-tier leadership and consultancy roles across diverse sectors:

- **Academia & Research:** Expert roles within research and higher education institutions, focusing on scientific development and pedagogy.
- **Public & International Governance:** Senior positions in public administration, local government, international institutions, and NGOs.
- **Corporate Management:** Strategic leadership and decision-making roles within large companies and global corporations.
- **Consultancy & Strategy:** Interdisciplinary advisory roles and strategic consultancy for complex organizational systems.
- **Media & Public Relations:** Leadership in the media sector and professional management of modern communication challenges.



CATALOGUE OF DOCTORAL STUDY SUPERVISORS

VALENTIN AREH, PhD

Assistant Professor



Field of habilitation: Media and Communication

About: Dr. Valentin Areh is an Assistant Professor and serves as the Head of the School of Media and Communication.

Research areas:

- Media studies
- Communication
- War correspondence
- Journalism ethics
- Media management

Note to students: A doctoral programme demands independence, persistence, and strong inner motivation, but it also provides a unique opportunity for profound and meaningful research. I advise future candidates to select a topic they are truly passionate about and to be ready to dedicate themselves fully to the process.

More information:

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Working languages: Slovenian, English, Croatian, Serbian (Latin), Bosnian, Montenegrin (Latin)

PEDJA AŠANIN GOLE, PhD

Assistant Professor



Field of habilitation: Communication Science

About: Dr. Pedja Ašanin Gole is an Assistant Professor of Communication Science. After a successful career in business, consultancy, and international project management, he transitioned to academia. He co-shaped the development of the public relations profession in Slovenia and the region; he was a co-founder of the Slovenian Public Relations Conference (SKOJ) and the regional conference Proactive. He is a member of EUPRERA and IABC and a former President of PRSS. His research and lectures focus on neo-institutional theory, strategic planning, strategic and crisis communication, and social marketing. He has been a visiting lecturer in Scotland and Macedonia.

Research areas:

- Strategic communication, issue management and crisis communication
- Public relations and neo-institutional theory
- Social marketing and communication campaigns
- Social responsibility, corporate governance, sustainability, and ethics
- Institutionalisation and social legitimisation of organisations

Note to students: Develop innovative social solutions, master cutting-edge research skills, and build a successful career based on ethics and social responsibility under the guidance of experienced mentors.

More information:

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Working languages: Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian (Latin), Bosnian, Montenegrin (Latin)

TAMARA BESEDNJAK VALIČ, PhD

Associate Professor



Field of habilitation: Sociology

About: Dr. Tamara Besednjak Valič is a senior scientific associate at the Rudolfovo – Science and Technology Centre Novo mesto and associate professor of sociology at the Faculty of Information Studies and School of Advanced Social Studies (Slovenia). She is a member of the Regional Studies Association. She was a visiting researcher at higher education institutions in the USA (University of Nevada, Reno), Italy (University of Bologna, LINK Campus University), and Russia (Medical School of Kazan University). She participated as a team member in several national and international projects dealing with topics of regional development, gambling (economic, social, and psychological aspects). She acted as project manager of international projects covering the topic of innovation ecosystems, intersectoral collaboration, IPR and sustainability. Her work is related to the sociological theory of social fields with a strong interpretative paradigmatic background. Her work employs a variety of research methods, such as qualitative research (primary and secondary), secondary data analysis, and comparative approaches (fuzzy set).

Research areas:

- Steering of social systems
- Innovation ecosystems
- Role of the entrepreneurial and creative spirit within ecosystems
- Social narratives

Note to students: The best doctoral dissertation is the one that is completed and successfully defended

More information:

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Working languages: Slovenian, English

NIKOLINA BORČIĆ, PhD

Assistant Professor



Field of habilitation: Communication; Media studies

About: Dr. Nikolina Borčić is an Assistant Professor at the University of Zagreb specializing in media discourse, persuasive communication, and identity in public communication. She is the author of *Vrag je u detalju* (2023) and co-author of the university textbook *Propaganda slavnih* (2025). She has published over 40 scientific papers and presented at more than 30 international conferences. Her research focuses on political communication, media language, image construction, and AI-mediated discourse. She has delivered guest lectures in France, Portugal, and Indonesia through Erasmus+ and joint programs, and is a columnist analysing public and celebrity communication.

Research areas:

- Media discourse analysis, with emphasis on linguistic, stylistic and narrative structures in political and public communication
- Persuasive and informative communication, including argumentation, conceptual metaphors and ethos-building strategies
- Gender and identity in media and political discourse, including gender communication patterns and representations
- Image construction and celebrity/branding discourse, including propaganda of fame and celebrity communication
- Digital and AI-mediated communication, including media ecosystems, misinformation, and platform-specific narratives (e.g., Twitter, TikTok)

Note to students: Stay curious, think critically, and dare to question established narratives. Research thrives on clarity, integrity, and the courage to explore complex communication phenomena with depth and responsibility.

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Working languages: English, Croatian

LADISLAV CABADA, PhD

Full Professor



Field of habilitation: Political Science

About: Dr. Ladislav Cabada is a Professor of Political Science and Czech history, specialising in modern and contemporary politics in Central and Eastern Europe. He has published approximately 200 scholarly works in this field, including more than 20 books. His research has been supported by the Horizon Europe programme, several grants from the Czech Science Foundation, two Czech–Slovenia bilateral projects, and the Jean Monnet Chair programme. He served as President of the Czech Political Science Association for six years, followed by six years as President of the Central European Political Science Association. He is currently serving his second term on the Executive Committee of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR), where he also chairs the Events Subcommittee.

Research areas:

- Comparative politics of East–Central Europe
- Regionalism in Central Europe
- Democratic resilience
- Foreign policy analysis
- Symbolic and historical politics

Note to students: Doctoral studies represent a transition from studying to conducting your own scientific research. At a faculty specialising in applied social sciences, this provides an excellent opportunity to compare theory and practice.

More information:

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Working languages: Slovenian, English

IRENA CAJNER MRAOVIĆ, PhD

Full Professor



Field of habilitation: Sociology

About: Dr. Irena Cajner Mraović is an experienced researcher in sociology and criminology, leading and participating in numerous national and international projects on policing, violence and social control. She has coordinated several bilateral projects with Michigan State University and Slovenian partners, participated in COST Actions, and led projects on police integrity, community policing, and urban security. She is an active member of the European Society of Criminology and international research networks, contributing to comparative studies, policy development, and interdisciplinary academic cooperation. She has also mentored students who have received international awards for their work.

Research areas:

- Police integrity and legitimacy
- Workplace deviance
- Violence and crime
- Social control
- Children's rights in sports

Note to students: Doctoral study is an inspiring and challenging journey of learning to see things differently, engaging in critical thinking, conducting rigorous research, and making meaningful contributions to society.

More information:

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Working languages: English, Croatian, Serbian (Latin), Bosnian, Montenegrin (Latin)

MARKO ČULAR, PhD

Associate Professor



Field of habilitation: Accounting and Auditing

About: Dr. Marko Čular is an Associate Professor at the Department of Accounting and Auditing. He has presented and published over seventy scientific and professional papers at domestic and international conferences and in recognized A* journals. He is an active member of The Institute of Internal Auditors, The European Accounting Association and The Croatian Operational Research Society. Since 2014, he has served on the organizational and program committee of the Accounting, Auditing and Taxation in Practice conference and is Chair of the International Conference on Operational Research. He has participated in numerous scientific, ERASMUS+ and professional projects and regularly provides training for professional bodies in Croatia and abroad.

Research areas:

- Cybersecurity
- Internal auditing
- External auditing
- Cooperation between internal and external auditing
- Moderating role of audit committees in corporate governance

Note to students: All areas have already been scientifically researched :-)) Find a minimal “niche” and focus it on practical application.

More information:

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Working languages: Slovenian, English, Croatian

KREŠIMIR DABO, PhD

Associate Professor



Field of habilitation: Communication Sciences; Public Relations

About: Dr. Krešimir Dabo is an Associate Professor at the Department of Communication Studies, Faculty of Croatian Studies, University of Zagreb. He holds degrees in Economics, Business Communication Management, and Communication Sciences and Public Relations, and earned his PhD in Communication Sciences from Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek. His professional background includes experience in journalism, public relations, and cultural management. He has worked at RTL Television and at Croatia's national folk dance and music ensemble LADO, where he also served as General Manager. Dr. Dabo has led and participated in several scientific research projects and has worked as a research associate at the Institute for Migration Research. He is a member of the Croatian Public Relations Association and serves as an external lecturer at several universities in Croatia.

Research areas:

- Public relations in culture
- Branding in tourism and culture
- Heritage and public relations
- Social media management
- Crisis communication

Note to students: Associate Professor of Communication Sciences with research interests in media discourse, culture and public communication, as well as contemporary communication practices.

More information:

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Working languages: English, Croatian, Serbian (Latin), Bosnian, Montenegrin (Latin)

NATAŠA DERNOVŠČEK HAFNER, PhD

Assistant Professor



Field of habilitation: Psychology

About: Dr. Nataša Dernovšček Hafner is the national representative to the European Health Psychology Society (EHPS). She is a member of the Ethics Committee of the Institute of Oncology Ljubljana and a member of the Slovenian Association for Supervision, Coaching and Organisational Consulting. She has participated in several research projects, including:

- Improving Mental Health Literacy for the Management of Mood Disorders (OMRA)
- Strengthening Knowledge and Innovation Systems for Health and Safety on Farms (SafeHabitus) (1 January 2023 – 31 December 2026)
- Mental Health Difficulties among Migrants: Experiences of Identification and Treatment (1 October 2021 – 30 September 2024)
- Research on Mental Distress and Well-being (1 January 2023 – 31 December 2027)
- Well-being on Farms: Strengthening Resources and Knowledge (PoljaMoči)

Research areas:

- Mental health in the working population
- Health literacy
- Burnout
- Psychosocial risks

Note to students: Doctoral study marks the transition to independent research thinking. Uncertainty and doubt are not signs of failure, but integral parts of the research process. More important than having a perfectly formed initial idea is the ability to critically examine, refine, and deepen your research question throughout the process.

More information:

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Working languages: Slovenian, English

ERIKA DŽAJIĆ URŠIČ, PhD

Associate Professor



Field of habilitation: Social Science Informatics

About: Dr. Erika D. Uršič completed her PhD in Sociology at SASS. Her educational background is in Economic Engineering, and she currently serves as an Associate Professor of Social Science Informatics. Since 2014, her research has focused on industrial economics and regional development, with particular emphasis on the circular economy and industrial symbiosis, including their network structures. Her broader research interests also encompass social and human geography, digital society, sustainable tourism, and regional development. She has taught courses in research methodology, with a particular emphasis on qualitative research, data analysis, and mixed-methods approaches. In addition to her academic work, she actively contributes to the development of Interreg and Horizon projects, where she is involved in organisation, coordination, leadership, and the implementation of joint meetings, focus groups, and regional workshops. She is a member of the International Sociological Association (ISA) and the Regional Studies Association (RSA).

Research areas:

- Circular economy, industrial symbiosis, and sustainability transitions
- EU policies & strategies (cohesion policy, legislation, Agenda 2030, RRF/NextGenerationEU) and implementation challenges
- Digital society: sociological and data-driven approaches (bibliometrics, ontology analysis, scientific production)
- Sustainable tourism and regional development (proximity tourism, tourist behaviour, destination marketing)
- Human/regional geography of border areas (demographic change, new settlement patterns, ethnolinguistic minorities)

Note to students: Where there is a will, there is knowledge.

More information:

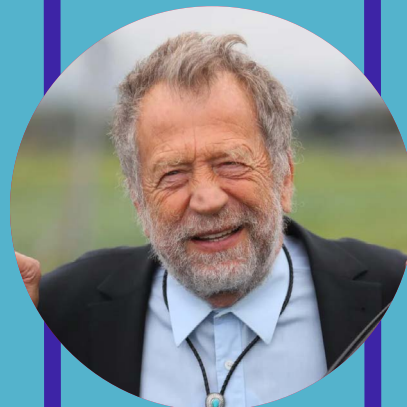
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Working languages: Slovenian, English

BOGOMIL FERFILA, PhD

Full Professor



Field of habilitation: Political Science

About: Dr. Bogomil Ferfila is the founder and head of the American, German, and Global Studies graduate programs at the University of Ljubljana. He is the author of many books published in Slovenia and abroad, including several in English. In 1994, he launched his own book series, *World on Your Palm*, which combines area studies with his personal travel experiences. He has also published numerous academic articles and participated in seminars and conferences worldwide, including in Israel, the United States, Norway, Japan, China, Austria, Brazil, and Canada.

He has lectured at many distinguished universities across North America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia. Professor Ferfila was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Pittsburgh (1990–1991) and a Japan Foundation Fellow (1998). He has served as a visiting professor at Cleveland State University and the University of Manitoba. From 1998 to 2017, he was a regular visiting scholar at the University of Manitoba and Washington State University, spending one to two months there annually.

Research areas:

- Country studies
- Comparative Politics
- Defence studies
- Political economy

Note to students: Work, work, work. :)

More information:

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Working languages: Slovenian, English, Croatian, Serbian (Latin), Bosnian, Montenegrin (Latin)

MATEJA GORENC, PhD

Assistant Professor



Field of habilitation: Business Sciences; Mathematics

About: Dr. Mateja Gorenc is an Assistant Professor with an interdisciplinary academic and professional background in mathematics, finance, accounting, business sciences, and information technology. Before entering academia, she gained extensive professional experience in the public sector, particularly in information technology. Her teaching and research focus on quantitative methods, business mathematics, statistics, research methodology, business finance, and business forensics. Her current research interests include forensic accounting, the detection of accounting fraud, the application of artificial intelligence and quantitative methods in fraud detection, and the optimization of decision-making processes. She combines quantitative and statistical approaches with practical business experience and is particularly interested in research with clear applicability to real-world organizational and financial problems.

Research areas:

- Forensic accounting, financial fraud and fraud detection
- Artificial intelligence, digital transformation and data-driven decision-making
- Quantitative research methods, applied statistics and data analysis
- Business finance, accounting and financial analysis
- Mathematical modelling, optimization and operations research

Note to students: A good doctoral dissertation begins with a relevant research question and develops through methodological rigor, critical thinking, and persistence. I encourage doctoral candidates to combine strong theoretical foundations with appropriate quantitative and empirical methods and to focus on research that contributes both to scientific knowledge and to addressing practical challenges.

More information:

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Working languages: Slovenian, English, Croatian, Serbian (Latin), Bosnian, Montenegrin (Latin)

TEA GOLOB, PhD

Full Professor



Field of habilitation: Sociology

About: Dr. Tea Golob holds a Jean Monnet Chair in European Industry 5.0. She is a member of the Slovenian National MOST Committee for UNESCO. She serves as Head of the Institute for Social Morphogenesis at FIS. She led a scientific research project on sustainable society funded by ARIS. She also coordinated the Jean Monnet Module integrating sustainability strategies with teaching activities. In addition, she was the national team leader of the Interreg CE project Development of WISE through Technological Advancements. Her international academic experience includes research and teaching appointments abroad. She was a visiting researcher at Sapienza University of Rome, and at Metropolitan University of Prague. She was also a visiting scholar at the Central European University (Budapest), the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, and Babeş-Bolyai University.

Research areas:

- Sustainability
- Digitalisation and social emergences
- Identities and belongings
- Industry 5.0
- Reflexivity

More information:

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Contact: tea.golob@fis.unm.si

Working languages: Slovenian, English

MIRELA HROVATIN, PhD

Assistant Professor



Field of habilitation: Cultural anthropology; Ethnology

About: Dr. Mirela Hrovatin is an Ethnologist and Cultural Anthropologist with a PhD from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities in Zagreb. Until 2025 she worked at the Ministry of Culture and Media on the inventorying of intangible cultural heritage in Croatia. Now she is at the Institute of Anthropology working on the topics of sustainable development, health and human well-being. She is also Assistant Professor at the Catholic University of Croatia in Zagreb, and a member of several professional associations, including Croatian Ethnological Society, EASA PILNET and the network of facilitators of the 2003 UNESCO Convention.

Research areas:

- Cultural heritage studies
- Intangible cultural heritage
- UNESCO cultural policies
- Anthropology of pilgrimage
- Religious practices

Note to students: Each of us combines the learned information in a unique way, so working together as a supervisor and a candidate should produce highly complex and valuable final work.

More information:

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Working languages: Slovenian, English, Croatian, Serbian (Latin), Bosnian

SEBASTJAN JERETIČ, PhD

Assistant Professor



Field of habilitation: Communication Studies

About: Dr. Sebastjan Jeretič holds a PhD in Political Science and has extensive experience in strategic and communication consulting. His academic research primarily focuses on the psychology of decision-making, with particular emphasis on voter behaviour. Drawing on insights from contemporary neuroscience and behavioural economics, he has developed a comprehensive approach to persuasion and moderation based on scientific findings about how the human brain processes messages, how decisions are made, and how these processes can be influenced. He applies his experience from political campaigns and executive communication coaching to the regulation of internal communication within organisations, aiming to foster mutual satisfaction between management and employees, as this represents one of the most effective ways to build a motivated workforce. His current research includes the analysis of political polarisation and the related heuristics and cognitive biases that shape political attitudes and decision-making.

Research areas:

- The ontology of power
- Political communication and persuasion
- Neurorhetoric and cognitive framing
- Political psychology
- Psychology of decision-making

Note to students: The priority lies in integrating cognitive and affective processes within the context of politics, power, and communication. Particular emphasis is placed on applying the foundational insights of classical political philosophy alongside contemporary theories from neuroscience and behavioural economics.

More information:

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Working languages: Slovenian, English, Croatian, Serbian (Latin), Bosnian, Montenegrin (Latin)

PETRA KLEINDIENST, PhD

Associate Professor



Field of habilitation: Sociology; Law

About: Dr. Petra Kleindienst is an Associate Professor and researcher in the fields of sociology and law. Her overarching research focus is the concept of human dignity, which she explores not only in its legal dimension but also through an interdisciplinary lens, connecting it with education, democratic political culture, vulnerable groups, and broader social issues. She participates in national and international research projects, primarily related to human dignity and the development of education. Her work focuses on designing competency frameworks, introducing modern and innovative teaching and learning methods, and strengthening cooperation between educational institutions and the economy. She has conducted extended research visits at Santa Clara University (Santa Clara, California), Universidade Aberta (Lisbon, Portugal), and Central European University (Budapest, Hungary).

Research areas:

- Human dignity
- Human rights
- Democratic political culture
- Education

Note to students: Writing a doctoral dissertation represents a demanding yet exceptionally creative step into the scientific realm. It means moving beyond professional knowledge through research excellence and making an original contribution to science. Persevere, explore, and dare to think differently.

More information:

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Working languages: Slovenian, English

JANEZ KOLAR, PhD

Assistant Professor



Field of habilitation: Management

About: Dr. Janez Kolar describes himself as a traveller through time, exploring pathways to success in its broadest sense — essentially, pathways towards synchronising ancient wisdom and insights with contemporary creative potential in ways that foster coexistence and a high quality of life, both now and in the future. Through his interdisciplinary academic background (BSc in Mechanical Engineering, MSc in Economics, PhD in Sociology, among others), he actively seeks to connect different fields of knowledge and address a central question: how — including through academic means — to identify the key factors of individual, group, organisational, national, and human success. His professional and entrepreneurial career has spanned both management and corporate governance. He has held leadership and managerial positions at institutions and companies such as GEA College, DHL International Express, Volvo Trucks, L'Oréal Paris, Panasonic (Matsushita Electric Industrial Corporation, Japan), the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Ljubljana Entrepreneurship Centre. He has also been involved in corporate governance at organisations including Ljubljana Airport, Iskra Emeco, Slovenia Control (Air Traffic Control), and Thermana Wellness Company. He co-founded and served as President of two Rotary Clubs, was a member of the Executive Board of the Ljubljana Managers' Club, and a member of the Slovenian Human Resources Association. He was also among the founding members of the Indo-Slovenian Friendship Association. Since delivering his first public lecture on 13 December 1992, entitled Preparing a Winning Business Plan, he has conducted hundreds of trainings, workshops, coaching sessions, university lectures, and team-building programmes in Slovenia and abroad. As a mentor, he has supervised more than 250 graduates from over half a dozen countries across all three levels of higher education.

Research areas:

- Individual and organisational development
- Digitalisation and digital transformation processes
- Knowledge transfer and technology transfer
- The impact of emerging technologies on human development and society

Note to students: Supervising doctoral students is one of the most important aspects of my personal mission, which is why I do it with special care and attention.

More information:

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Working languages: Slovenian, English, Croatian, Serbian (Latin), Bosnian, Montenegrin (Latin)

JANA KRIVEC, PhD

Associate Professor



Field of habilitation: Psychology

About: Dr. Jana Krivec participates in both international and national research projects. Her involvement includes COST Actions such as GameTable – Computational Techniques for Tabletop Games Heritage and RISEUP – Peripartum Depression Disorder. She has also collaborated on the UNICEF-supported project assisting refugees and migrants in cooperation with the Social Chamber of Slovenia. She has contributed to several applied research projects (PKP and ŠIPK), including OSVET (Virtual Psychosocial Counsellor), NODEPRA (National Awareness on Coping with Depression), VARNOSTAR (Sense of Safety among Older Adults), and It Starts in the Family (Parental Acceptance and Rejection of Adolescents). Through Erasmus mobility, she has been a visiting scholar at universities in Lebanon (American University of Beirut), Russia (Moscow State University of Psychology and Education), the Philippines (University of the Philippines Diliman), and Finland (University of Jyväskylä). She serves as a reviewer for international scientific journals, including Memory & Cognition and Educational Psychology, and is Director of the National Institute for Psychotherapy.

Research areas:

- Fundamental cognitive processes and information processing
- Expertise, procedural representations, and learning
- Stress, sleep, and cognitive-behavioural performance
- Information and communication technologies in cognitive and educational contexts
- Developmental, educational, and intercultural aspects of psychological characteristics and mental health

Note to students: The doctoral journey is a pursuit of truth. Through motivation, systematic thinking, and impartial, verifiable reasoning, the researcher expands the boundaries of the subjective mind and shapes an objective understanding of a fragment of reality. It is a path that leads through doubt toward insight.

More information:

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SIMONA KUKOVIČ, PhD

Full Professor



Field of habilitation: Political Science

About: Dr. Simona Kukovič is a Full Professor of Political Science specialising in political and administrative local leadership. Her broader research focuses on leadership, comparative local and regional government, local democracy and participation, regional development, and public administration. She serves as the Slovenian representative in COST networks, Secretary General and Executive Committee member of the Central European Political Science Association (CEPSA), and Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Comparative Politics. In 2024, she completed executive education in leadership at Yale University, CT, USA. Dr. Kukovič has been a visiting professor and researcher at several universities, including De Montfort University (UK), the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (USA), Paris Lodron University of Salzburg (Austria), and Montana State University (USA). She has led numerous national and international research projects, including a postdoctoral project on local community leadership (2018–2020) and six bilateral projects between Slovenia and partner countries. Awarded the title of Jean Monnet Professor in 2022, she held a Jean Monnet Chair (2022–2024), founded the Summer Leadership Academy, and in 2024 became Head of the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence. For 2025–2027, she serves as Project Manager of the SMILE Incubator within the Interreg Danube Transnational Programme. Dr. Kukovič is the (co-)author of numerous scholarly publications.

Research areas:

- Leadership studies
- Comparative regional/local government and development
- Local democracy and participation
- Public administration
- Administrative and political processes and institutions

Note to students: Embrace challenges – they shape you into a researcher who dares to open new questions and explore unknown paths. Every great idea begins with a small question, and the PhD journey is not only about science, but also about discovering yourself.

More information:

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Working languages: Slovenian, English

URŠA LAMUT, PhD

Associate Professor



Field of habilitation: Sociology

About: Dr. Urša Lamut is a research associate specialising in qualitative research and evaluation studies. In recent years, she has been involved in international projects under ERASMUS+ (AI-powered Next Generation of VET), Interreg (DANUBE-CULINARY TRAIL, AMOCEAB), and DIGITAL (SRC-EDIH), where she focuses on digital transformation, the social dimensions of technology, and the development of innovation ecosystems. Her research work also encompasses the field of public health and the analysis of complex social processes. She has a particular research interest in academic entrepreneurship from the perspective of the researcher, examining the motivational, organisational, and cultural factors that encourage or hinder researchers in innovation and knowledge transfer. In her teaching, she contributes to master's and doctoral programmes, primarily in the field of research methodology, where she promotes a critical and reflective understanding of research practice.

Research areas:

- Innovation
- Academic Entrepreneurship
- Qualitative Research
- Dynamics of Social Fields

Note to students: Research work is both discipline and reflection. The process shapes your research identity, your way of thinking, and your methodological maturity. The result is important; however, intellectual transformation is essential.

More information:

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Working languages: Slovenian, English, Croatian

PREDRAG LJUBOTINA, PhD

Associate Professor



Field of habilitation: Management; Quantitative methodology

About: Dr. Predrag Ljubotina is an associate professor of economics and quantitative research methods in science. He received his doctorate in management from the University of Primorska. During his 25-year entrepreneurial career, he gained experience in a multicultural international environment, successfully leading development and sales teams and completing several internationalisation projects. His primary area of research is economic psychology, with an emphasis on interpersonal organisational relationships in business environments. He focuses particularly on family businesses, the succession process, and related specifics. Recently, he has been actively participating in several international research projects, including a large-scale global survey of students' career intentions (GUESSS). He is devoted to modern quantitative methods in science, with an emphasis on data collection for psychological and sociological research. He is a member of many research teams, where he serves as a methodologist.

Research areas:

- Quantitative methodology in psychology and social sciences
- Entrepreneurial psychology
- Organisational relationships
- Family business
- Risk management

Note to students: The mind does not require filling like a bottle, but rather, like wood, it only requires igniting to create in it an impulse to think independently and an ardent desire for the truth. – Plutarch

More information:

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Working languages: Slovenian, English, Croatian, Serbian (Latin), Bosnian, Montenegrin (Latin)

DARKO LONČARIĆ, PhD

Associate Professor



Field of habilitation: Psychology

About: Dr. Darko Lončarić is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Rijeka. He teaches at graduate and postgraduate levels, covering courses in educational psychology, neuropsychology of early learning, and applied statistics. He earned his PhD in Psychology in 2008 from the University of Ljubljana. His research interests include self-regulated learning, motivation, creativity, educational psychology, developmental psychology, applied statistics, cognitive psychology, the use of ICT in education, and the competencies of preschool and primary school teachers. He is the author or co-author of two books, seven book chapters, and more than 40 scientific publications. He has participated in eight scientific and applied research projects and has presented his work at 34 international and 40 regional scientific and professional conferences.

Research areas:

- Educational psychology
- Self-regulated learning
- Coping with stress
- Educational sciences
- Motivation

Note to students: The best doctoral dissertation is the one that is submitted and defended. It is merely a qualifying piece of work that gives you a driver's licence to travel the roads of creating new knowledge. Your life's masterpiece will come later.

More information:

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DANIJELA LUCIĆ, PhD

Associate Professor



Field of habilitation: Sociology

About: Dr. Danijela Lucić is an Associate Professor of Sociology actively engaged in international research and academic collaboration. She has participated in several international projects, including On-Wheels Summer School for the Socio-Cultural Evolution of European Values, Principles, Identity and Awareness (Erasmus+, 2022–2025) and Civic Engagement of Cultural and Historical Heritage in Urban and Suburban Environments – EU Context, Perspectives and Good Practices (Erasmus+, 2021–2024), among others. Her international research experience includes academic visits to University College Dublin (2023) and the University of California, Berkeley (2025). She is also a member of the Intelligence College in Europe.

Research areas:

- Terrorism/State Terrorism
- Security
- Intelligence Studies
- Violence in society
- History of violence

Note to students: Doctoral work is an extremely demanding process that requires great intrinsic motivation, a lot of work and sacrifice. On that path, there are often psychological dramas with ourselves. But in the end, it's all worth it. Because only what we struggle and strive for is worth it. And that fact should guide you forward in your desire to reach the top of academic education. Keep going!

More information:

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Working languages: Croatian, English

SVETLANA MIHIC, PhD

Full Professor



Field of habilitation: Marketing; Public Relations

About: Dr. Svetlana Mihic is a Full Professor and a lecturer at several faculties in her home country and abroad. She is a member of the HEA Commission for the accreditation of higher education institutions in Europe. From 2016 to 2018, she served as Undersecretary of the Government of Vojvodina for Higher Education and Scientific Research.

Research areas:

- Marketing
- Public relations

Note to students: We will develop your doctoral topic together, as collaboration makes us stronger. I provide engaging research topics, access to the latest methodologies, data, and relevant literature, as well as efficient guidance to ensure timely completion while maintaining the highest quality of our joint work.

More information:

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Working languages: Slovenian, English, Croatian, Serbian (Latin), Bosnian, Montenegrin (Latin)

LEO MRŠIĆ, PhD

Full Professor



Field of habilitation: Information Sciences; Computer Science and Informatics

About: Dr. Leo Mršić is a Full Professor with an extensive scientific and professional background. He has published more than 100 scientific papers and is the author of six international patents. He has served as a reviewer, editor, and committee member at more than 80 international and national conferences, and has supervised over 35 undergraduate, master's, and doctoral theses. He is a member of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts (HAZU), serving on the Scientific Council for Medicine and Technology. He also serves as Vice-Chair for Technological Development and Innovation at the National Council for Higher Education, Science and Technological Development within the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth of Croatia. Dr. Mršić is Vice-Rector for Science and Research at Algebra Bernays University. He is a member of the Scientific Council of the Rudolfovo Public Research Centre in Slovenia, a member of the Asian Council of Science Editors (ACIS), and Head of the BDV i-Gold Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics (DAIRO). Education and Scientific Research.

Research areas:

- Economics and finance (including accounting, economic mathematics, and statistics)
- Computer science and information sciences (informatics, information systems, information processing, software engineering, artificial intelligence)
- Interdisciplinary applications of computer science in biomedical engineering

Note to students: Be open to try new things and use digital tech/deep tech to help you.

More information:

- Registar znanstvenika: 335120 (MZOS/HR), 40412 (SICRIS/SLO); HRZZ ID: eef9ac32-bfa6-4672-add8-4f5943bd3950; WoS ResearcherID: F-3836-2017; Scopus Author ID: 56562998000
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Working languages: English, Croatian, Serbian (Latin), Bosnian, Montenegrin (Latin)

SAŠO MURTIČ, PhD

Associate Professor



Field of habilitation: Law; Logistics

About: Dr. Sašo Murtič collaborates with three faculties and two higher vocational institutions in Slovenia, as well as with Baltazar Polytechnic in Zaprešić, Croatia.

Research areas:

- Law
- Logistics
- Organisation and organisational management
- Inter-organisational collaboration
- Intelligent systems

Note to students: Through our research areas, we will gain insights into societal development, the geopolitical division of the world, trade flows, and inter-organisational cooperation. In all these areas, we will explore the legal frameworks that shape social processes, development, education, and broader societal dynamics.

More information:

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Working languages: Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian (Latin), Bosnian, Montenegrin (Latin)

FADIL MUŠINOVIČ, PhD

Assistant Professor



Field of habilitation: Management and Governance

About: Dr. Fadil Mušinovič is a member of the Executive Board of the EUMMAS – European Marketing and Management Association. He also serves on the Executive Board of the International Scientific Conference of FKPV Celje. He is the project leader of Varni koraki (Safe Steps), in cooperation with the ZŠAM of Slovenia. In addition, he acts as a reviewer for publications of B2 Higher Education Institution and FKPV.

Research areas:

- Management
- Security
- Organisation and organisational management
- Communication

Note to students: As a prospective mentor, I welcome motivated candidates who wish to explore contemporary challenges in management, security, and crisis response, and who aim to contribute through their knowledge to a safer and more resilient society.

More information:

- Cobiss/SICRIS system (www.sicris.si) researcher ID number: 40738
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Working languages: Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian (Latin), Bosnian, Montenegrin (Latin)

STANISLAV NAKIĆ, PhD

Full Professor



Field of habilitation: Economics and Management

About: Dr. Stanislav Nakić regularly participates in international scientific conferences and academic events, including Development of Public Administration at Lavoslav Ružička University of Applied Sciences in Vukovar, University of Applied Sciences in Šibenik, Marko Marulić University of Applied Sciences in Knin, and the University of Herzegovina in Mostar. He is also involved in scholarly activities related to the scientific journal *Oeconomicus* (Zagreb), among other academic engagements.

Research areas:

- Economics
- Management
- Finance
- Controlling
- Marketing

Note to students: Write and conduct research across all areas.

More information:

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- ORCID number: /

Contact: miconakic@gmail.com

Working languages: Croatian, Bosnian

ALENKA PANDILOSKA JURAK, PhD

Associate Professor



Field of habilitation: Sociology

About: Dr. Alenka Pandiloska Jurak is an Associate Professor actively engaged in numerous international and national research and development projects, particularly within the Danube Region and European innovation frameworks. She has extensive experience in project leadership, consortium coordination, and financial management.

She serves as Consortium Partner Leader, Work Package Leader, and Financial Manager in the project SMILE Incubator – Social Media Leadership Incubator for the Danube Region (2025–2027). She is also Financial Manager of the project Culinary Trail of the Ethnic and Local Cuisine in the Danube Region (2024–2026). Previously, she was Financial Manager of MELIA Observatory – Media Literacy Observatory for Active Citizenship and Sustainable Democracy (2020–2022) and KnowING IPR – Fostering Innovation in the Danube Region through Knowledge Engineering and IPR Management (2018–2021). She also contributed to InnoHPC – High-Performance Computing for Effective Innovation in the Danube Region (2017–2019). She is currently leading the consortium partner group in AI-powered Next Generation of VET (AI4VET4AI) (2023–2027) and has been involved in the Jean Monnet Module Technology Innovation Communities 2030 (2022–2024). She also serves as Consortium Partner Leader in SRC-EDIH – European Digital Innovation Hub (2022–2025). Additionally, she is a member of the research groups in the projects Development Processes and Interactions in the Digital Society (P5-0445, 2024–2027), Analysis of the Support Environment for Effective Management and Exploitation of Intellectual Property in Slovenia (V5-24054, 2024–2026), and Strengthening the Development of Industrial Symbiosis Networks in Slovenia – Transition to a Circular Economy (J7-50186, 2023–2026).

Research areas:

- Regional development
- Technology transfer
- Public policy and social networks
- European Union policies
- Cooperation between enterprises and higher education/research organisations

Note to students: Research begins with curiosity.

More information:

- <https://www.fis.unm.si/pedagoski-in-znanstveni-sodelavci/izr-prof-dr-alenka-pandiloska-jurak/>
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Working languages: Slovenian, English, Croatian, Serbian (Latin), Montenegrin (Latin)

DIANA PLANTIĆ TADIĆ, PhD

Associate Professor



Field of habilitation: Marketing

About: Dr. Diana Plantić Tadić works as an Associate Professor and Head of Marketing HUB at the VERN' University in Zagreb. The major fields of her research interest are marketing communication, market research, quality management and tourism. She lectured at numerous workshops and conducted many research projects for Croatian leading companies. Diana has published over 70 scientific/professional papers and participated in several significant Erasmus projects. She is a professional associate of Croatian Agency for Science and Higher Education, and holds Charter Award for Outstanding Contribution in Developing and Promoting Quality in Science and Practice. Also, she has worked for different business projects holding various posts, including consultancy, lectureships and auditing of small businesses and international companies.

Research areas:

- Integrated marketing communications
- Market research
- Marketing strategy
- Branding
- Quality management

Note to students: First of all, follow your field of interest and be prepared for a PhD marathon. Be aware of all the expectations you have to meet but preserve your health (both mental and physical). Remember that the crucial factor is your persistence, not just intelligence!

More information:

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Working languages: English, Croatian, Serbian (Latin), Bosnian

ANDREJA POLJANEC, PhD

Assistant Professor



Field of habilitation: Psychology

About: Dr. Andreja Poljanec is psychologist and family and marital therapist. She co-funded Study and Research centre for Families. She was the head of the Psychology department at Sigmund Freud University Vienna – Ljubljana branch. She has been collaborating on the UNICEF projects about breastfeeding for many years. She has contributed to several applied research projects (PKP and ŠIPK). She is the Slovenian coordinator of an international research project on parental burnout. Her current research focuses on the intergenerational transmission of emotions stress in relation to parental burnout. She leads the Slovenian segment of the international study Mind the Mum: Placing Parental Mental Health and Care at the Forefront (Slovenia, Cyprus, Poland). She also collaborates with the Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing of Slovenia, where she leads a pilot study on the mental health of deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. Dr. Poljanec serves as Editor-in-Chief of the Slovenian scientific journal Kairos.

Research areas:

- Parental burnout and its determinants
- Postpartum depression and maternal mental health
- Breastfeeding
- Psychosocial support groups for young mothers
- Teachers' attachment styles
- Absenteeism and presenteeism in the work environment
- Mental health in deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals

Note to students: Research opens new horizons, brings new insights and connections, and is a journey that never truly ends. It keeps you intellectually alive and continually growing. Research is a way of life – rich, dynamic, challenging, and marked by ongoing personal development. I would be delighted to welcome you to the research team.

More information:

- <https://cultural-psychology-hub.eu/countries/slovenia/>
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Working languages: Slovenian, English

MAJA PUCELJ, PhD

Assistant Professor



Field of habilitation: Anthropology; Organisation and Management

About: Dr. Maja Pucelj serves as Head of Research, Development, and Innovation at the Euro-Mediterranean University. She is the Director of the Master's programme Digitalisation and Human Rights and leads the projects EUNICoast – European University of Islands, Ports and Coastal Territories and DIGIVOTE – Strengthening Trust, Transparency and Inclusion in Digital Voting. In 2024, she received the Human Rights Ombudsman Award for the best doctoral research in the field of human rights in Slovenia. In the same year, she completed the international postdoctoral programme Globalisation and Human Rights in the Mediterranean at the International Centre for Human Rights Research at the Università degli Studi Mediterranea in Italy.

Research areas:

- Human rights
- Digital ethics
- Women's rights
- Social responsibility
- Digital democracy

Note to students: Doctoral study is not merely a programme of study; it is a process of personal, professional, and research transformation. Like any meaningful journey, it requires dedication, hard work, and occasional sacrifice. However, the rewards it brings will undoubtedly return to you many times throughout your life. In moments when the path feels most challenging, remember that every journey eventually reaches its destination, and that the reward at the end is well worth the effort.

More information:

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Working languages: Slovenian, English, Croatian, Bosnian

ANDREJ RASPOR, PhD

Full Professor



Field of habilitation: Management

About: Dr. Andrej Raspor was born in 1965 in Šempeter pri Novi Gorici. He initially trained as a mechanical technician. After completing his university studies in Organisation and Management of Human Resource and Educational Systems at the Faculty of Organisational Sciences, University of Maribor (Kranj), he continued his postgraduate studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, where he obtained his PhD in 2010. He has more than 40 years of professional experience, including over 20 years in senior leadership positions. His roles have included Head of General Affairs, Director of Human Resource Development and Strategic Projects, Chair of the Cost Control Committee, and Director of his own company. He is an entrepreneur, founder of several start-ups, and a business consultant. His research and teaching activities fall within the fields of social sciences, particularly administrative and organisational studies.

Research areas:

- Labor relations and processes with an emphasis on optimization of work processes (human resources, costs, organization of working time)
- Tourism with an emphasis on Chinese and African outbound tourism, tourism for people with special needs and sustainable tourism
- Open innovation and industry 5.0; Gambling
- People with special needs (elderly, disabled, young)
- Gratuity as a research topic
- Project management
- E-education and e-business

Note to students: Research should always surprise you. A PhD is a demanding yet deeply rewarding journey of knowledge, collaboration, and personal growth, requiring curiosity, perseverance, and an open mind.

More information:

- <https://www.andrejrasspor.com/index.php/sl/>
- <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Andrej-Raspor>
- <https://scholar.google.si/citations?user=Y89fl3UAAAAJ&hl=sl>
- <https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=57191828764>
- Cobiss/SICRIS system (www.sicris.si) researcher ID number: 35741
- ORCID number: 0000-0002-8098-9554

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Working languages: Slovenian, English, Croatian, Serbian (Latin), Bosnian, Montenegrin (Latin)

MITJA REICHENBERG, PhD

Assistant Professor



Field of habilitation: Media Production, Film Studies, Music; Social Sciences

About: Dr. Mitja Reichenberg is an Assistant Professor. He works in the field of sociological research, focusing on the analysis of phenomena related to visual, auditory, and multimedia art, with particular attention to their embeddedness within broader social, cultural, and technological contexts. A significant part of his research interest lies at the intersection of technology and the social sciences, which he approaches both as complex social phenomena and as key drivers of contemporary societal transformations. He is particularly interested in how algorithmic systems, automation, and data-driven technologies reshape the production and reception of art, while simultaneously influencing social relations, perception, and the construction of meaning. He understands media as dynamic and multilayered systems of mediation that function as active agents in processes of production, social regulation, and cultural imagination.

Research areas:

- Sociology of visual, auditory, and multimedia art
- Sociology and theory of media (media as social, cultural, and symbolic systems)
- Artificial intelligence as a social and cultural phenomenon
- Algorithmic culture and the digital transformations of contemporary society
- Mediatization of social space and the formation of subjectivities

Note to students: It is important that you are genuinely interested in critical and interdisciplinary research of contemporary society at the intersection of sociology, media, art, and technology. Candidates who wish to explore visual, auditory, and multimedia art, the role of artificial intelligence, and the impact of media and algorithmic culture on social processes and the formation of subjectivities are warmly welcome.

More information:

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Working languages: Slovenian, English

MATEJA REK, PhD

Full Professor



Field of habilitation: Sociology

About: Dr. Mateja Rek is a professor at the Faculty of Information Studies in Novo Mesto and the School of Advanced Social Studies in Nova Gorica, Slovenia. Her research addresses digital societal transformations, grounded in long-term evidence from the Infrastructure Program on Media Literacy, which she has led since 2013. She also contributes to the research programme Development Processes and Interactions in the Digital Society, funded by the Slovene Research and Innovation Agency and is involved in the European Network on Digitalization and E-Governance, a Jean Monnet Policy Debate project supported by Erasmus+.

Research areas:

- Media literacy and media education
- Digital society and digital citizenship
- Digital transformation of society
- Digital marketing communication and consumerism
- Media, communication and democratic participation in digital environments

Note to students: /

More information:

- <https://www.fuds.si/sodelavci/prof-dr-mateja-rek/>
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- ORCID number: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0928-1163>

Contact: mateja.rek@fuds.si

Working languages: Slovenian, English

JASMINKA SAMARDŽIJA, PhD

Associate Professor



Field of habilitation: Social Sciences – Economics

About: Dr. Jasminka Samardžija is an Associate Professor in Economics at RIT Croatia, where she has taught since 2012, and was an adjunct assistant professor at RIT Dubai (2021–2024). She holds a PhD in Economics, an MSc in Economics, and an AMBA-accredited Executive MBA (Cotrugli Business School). Her research focuses on leadership in the AI era, AI and the future of work, the gig economy, human resource management, and business excellence. She leads RIT Croatia's team in the EIT-funded BOOST4STEM project and is a member of the SASS-led SMILE Incubator project team. She has published nearly 60 scientific and professional papers, including Web of Science- and Scopus-indexed work, and authored the book Interviews with 100 Croatian Leaders on Life and Career Development (2013) and co-authored Human Resource Management in Business Practice (2015). She is a Member of AOM, the Croatian Economists Association, and the Croatian Quality Managers Society; an ISO 9001 lead auditor; a certified mediator; and director of Motivacijski govornik Ltd. consultancy company.

Research areas:

- Leadership in the AI era and leader profiles in transition economies
- Artificial intelligence and the future of work: AI adoption, AI literacy, AI governance and the gig economy
- Human resource management, motivation and career development
- Business excellence and quality management (EFQM model, ISO standards)
- Digital entrepreneurship, startup ecosystems and EU funding for innovation

Note to students: Start by knowing yourself: set clear priorities, be honest about your strengths and the areas you still need to develop, and choose a research question that will challenge all of them. I value practical, evidence-based research that speaks to real organisations, and I will guide you step by step. My motto, in life and in research, is simple: you can do it!

More information:

- <https://www.croris.hr/osobe/profil/28602>
- Google Scholar: <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=4saoDIEAAAAJ>
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Working languages: Croatian, English

METKA SKUBIC, PhD

Assistant Professor



Field of habilitation: Midwifery

About: Dr Metka Skubic holds a PhD in Marriage and Family Therapy and is licensed to work with parents and newborns using the NBO (Newborn Behavioural Observations) method, certified by the Brazelton Institute at Harvard Medical School. As a visiting lecturer, she is actively engaged in research and teaching within the international academic community. Her work spans pedagogical, scientific, and therapeutic fields, including delivering lectures and workshops, developing study programmes, designing research collaborations, and facilitating knowledge transfer in midwifery, perinatal mental health, early attachment, and parent–infant relationships. She regularly participates in international conferences and contributes to the advancement of interdisciplinary approaches in education and research.

Research areas:

- Early attachment and the transition to parenthood
- Psychosocial and relational aspects of pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood
- Perinatal mental health and perinatal trauma
- Perinatal loss and grieving processes within the family system

Note to students: Knowledge is a value that deepens through curiosity, perseverance, and research integrity. I understand doctoral study as a shared journey of growth, critical thinking, and responsible contribution to society – grounded in scientific excellence and personal integrity.

More information:

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Working languages: Slovenian, English

TJAŠA STEPIŠNIK PERDIH, PhD

Assistant Professor



Field of habilitation: Psychosocial Counselling

About: Dr. Tjaša Stepišnik Perdiš holds a PhD in Marital and Family Therapy and is a pioneer of Sensorimotor Psychotherapy in Slovenia. As a lecturer at SASS and a counsellor in private practice, she specialises in psychosomatics, trauma, and the TRE (Tension & Trauma Releasing Exercises) method. She actively participates in international research projects (e.g. INTERSECT) and serves as the Slovenian representative to the European Society for Trauma and Dissociation (ESTD). She is a former member of the Executive Board of the Slovenian Association for Marital and Family Therapy. Her work on the bodily dimension of emotional processes and therapeutic approaches is regularly presented at international and national conferences, as well as through numerous professional engagements and guest lectures.

Research areas:

- Psychotraumatology
- Birth trauma
- Psychosomatics
- Body-oriented techniques in counselling and psychotherapy
- Psychological safety

Note to students: It is never too late to be what you might have been.

More information:

- Cobiss/SICRIS system (www.sicris.si) researcher ID number: 39609
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Working languages: Slovenian, English

MATEVŽ TOMŠIČ, PhD

Full Professor



Field of habilitation: Sociology

About: Dr. Matevž Tomšič is a Full Professor of Sociology with extensive experience in international research collaboration. He has led and participated in several major international projects, including:

- Media Literacy Observatory for Active Citizenship and Sustainable Democracy (Danube Transnational Programme, 2020–2022) – Project Leader
- Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence: Media, Populism and Political Stability in the European Union (2021–2024)
- Jean Monnet Chair: Populism and the Future of European Democracy (2020–2023)

He has held visiting positions at several renowned international institutions, including Harvard University (Cambridge, USA, 2016), Central European University (Budapest, Hungary, 2011), American University of Beirut (Lebanon, 2017), Metropolitan University Prague (Czech Republic, 2018), and Babeş-Bolyai University (Cluj, Romania, 2013). Dr. Tomšič is the author and co-author of several influential books, including *Elites in the New Democracies* (2016, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang); *The Challenges of Sustained Development: The Role of Socio-Cultural Factors in East-Central Europe* (2005, New York & Budapest: CEU Press, co-authored with F. Adam, M. Makarovič and B. Rončević); and *Politična stabilnost v novih demokracijah* [Political Stability in New Democracies] (2002, Ljubljana: ZPS).

Research areas:

- Democracy and democratic governance
- Post-communist transformation processes
- Political and social elites
- Populism and political movements
- The role of media in contemporary society

Note to students: The path to earning a doctoral degree is not as difficult as it may seem at the beginning; however, it is dynamic and full of challenges. Those who possess the knowledge, determination, and energy will successfully complete it.

More information:

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Working languages: Slovenian, English, Croatian, Serbian (Latin), Bosnian, Montenegrin (Latin)

DEJAN VALENTINČIČ, PhD

Associate Professor



Field of habilitation: Political Science; Sociology; Law

About: Dr. Dejan Valentinčič is an Associate Professor with extensive international research and teaching experience. He has conducted research and delivered lectures at several universities in the United States, including Harvard University, Santa Clara University, Cleveland State University, Alfred University, Michigan State University, and Iowa State University. He has also lectured at the Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina in Buenos Aires and at the Pädagogische Hochschule Kärnten – University College of Teacher Education in Carinthia, Klagenfurt. He serves as Secretary General of the Brussels-based international NGO Europeans Throughout the World, which connects diaspora organisations across Europe, and as President of the World Slovenian Congress. Dr. Valentinčič has led several research projects in the fields of migration, brain drain and brain circulation, foreign policy and diplomacy, and minority rights.

Research areas:

- Minority rights, multilingualism, cultural rights, political rights, self-government
- Migration, brain drain/circulation, interethnic integration
- Foreign policy, international relations, diplomacy
- Political systems, division of powers, state organization

Note to students: I am happy to accept supervision in the above-mentioned areas, which touch on various aspects of interculturality and international relations, i.e. areas that are subject to very rapid social changes in the modern world.

More information:

- <https://epf.nova-uni.si/imenik/dejan-valentincic/>
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Working languages: Slovenian, English, Croatian, Serbian (Latin)

TINA VUKASOVIĆ, PhD

Full Professor



Field of habilitation: Marketing

About: Dr. Tina Vukasović is a Full Professor of Marketing. She is a member of the editorial boards of international scientific journals and serves as a reviewer for international journals and monographs published by renowned international publishers. She is also a member of organisational and programme committees of international scientific conferences in Slovenia and abroad. She maintains extensive international research collaboration with universities and research institutions, including Saint Joseph's University (USA), The Arctic University of Norway (Norway), The Hague University of Applied Sciences (Netherlands), Krakow University of Economics (Poland), the University of National and World Economy (Bulgaria), JOANNEUM University of Applied Sciences (Austria), the Faculty of Management at Rzeszow University of Technology (Poland), PAR University of Applied Sciences (Croatia), Framework Associazione (Italy), Viteco SRL (Italy), Innovation Education LAB (Romania), Rightchallenge (Portugal), and VšĮ Žinių Kodas (Lithuania). She has led multiple international research projects and has actively participated in international applied research projects.

Research areas:

- Consumer purchasing behaviour and decision-making
- Strategic marketing and marketing planning
- Digital marketing, social media, and contemporary marketing trends
- Brand management, brand equity, and new product development
- Sustainable and green marketing

Note to students: I offer prospective candidates research support in contemporary areas of marketing, an interdisciplinary approach, and guidance towards scientifically rigorous, internationally comparable, and practically relevant research.

More information:

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Working languages: Slovenian, English, Croatian, Serbian (Latin), Bosnian, Montenegrin (Latin)

MARTIN ŽAGAR, PhD

Full Professor



Field of habilitation: Computer Science

About: Prof. Dr. Martin Žagar is a Full Professor with Tenure in Computer Science. His research is mainly focused on multimedia applications and high-performance computing, with applications in telemedicine and IT project management. He is currently acting as a Principal Investigator and Project Lead on several EU Interreg projects and Erasmus+ projects, while also collaborating on several more, together with the EU COST projects. Prof. Žagar has published more than 150 publications, including books and book chapters, Q1-indexed journal articles and conference proceedings, and technical reports. He is a Member of IEEE, ISfTeH (International Society for Telemedicine & eHealth), AASCIT (American Association for Science and Technology), HiPEAC (European Network on High Performance and Embedded Architecture and Compilation), EAIE (European Association for International Education) and the Croatian Academy of Technical Sciences, and an editor and reviewer for a couple of international journals.

Research areas:

- Telemedicine,
- Multimedia systems,
- IoT,
- UAVs

Note to students: “You miss 100 of the shots you don’t take” (Wayne Gretzky)

More information:

- <https://www.croris.hr/crosbi/searchByContext/2/25814>

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