Technologically Mediated: Rethinking Human/Technology Relations
University of Malta, Valletta Campus
10 December 2025

Programme

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Technology. Inclusivity. Transparency. Sustainability. Community. Humanity

Neb Kujudzic</td></tr>
<tr><td>10.00-10.30</td><td colspan="2">Coffee Break</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="6">10.30-12.30</td><td>Panel 1: Technological Transformation and the Future of Human Agency

Chair: Christian Colombo

ROOM 5</td><td>Panel 2: Transhumanist Ethics, Identity, and Inequality

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<tr><td>Technology-Mediated Conversations as Collaborative Visual Poetry
Jane Leonard & Gordon J. Pace</td><td>Beyond Corporeality, Identity, and Mortality: Transhumanism in Pat Cadigan's Synners
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<tr><td>Panel 3: Mediation, Agency, and the Human in Technological Contexts

Chair: Matthew Galea

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<tr><td>Moral Agency and Technological Mediation
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	The Technology Lifecycle: Toward a Phenomenological Account of Subjectivity Luca Possati	*Rethinking André Leroi-Gourhan's "Technical Symbiosis": The More-Than-Human Diversity of Technical Milieu* Lufeng Xu
12.30-14.30	Lunch Break	
14.30-17.00	**Panel 5: Technological Practices and Creative Environments** Chair: Niki Young **ROOM 5**	**Panel 6: Regulation, Governance, and Digital Social Reconfigurations** Chair: Jacque Marliin **ROOM 6**
	Vertov's Mechanical Eye and Contemporary Non-Fiction Storytelling Gilbert Calleja	*When Regulations Become Code: AI, Agency, and the Mediation of Governance* Luca Nguyen & Stefano Moncada
	Drawing in a Technologically Mediated Environment Matthew Attard	*Breaking down The Techno-Regulatory Walls between Decentralised Techno-Communities and Real-World Supra/National Governing Structures* Joshua Ellul
	Notes on Practice: The Studio as Technology Matthew Galea	*Borderless Belonging: Re-Imagining the Nation-State After the Digital Revolution* Andre P. DeBattista & Christian Colombo
	Panel 7: Speech, Interpretation, and Moral Questions in Technological Domains Chair: Enrico Schiró **ROOM 5**	**Panel 8: Narrative, Responsibility, and Regulation in Emerging Digital Frameworks** Chair: Christian Colombo **ROOM 6**
	Technē Before Text: On the Technology of Speech and Future Sense-Expanding Methodologies Sondra Charbadze	*What About the Morality of Inventions in Patent Systems?* Benedicto Acosta
	A Post-Humanist View of Interpretation Amy Colman	*Algorithmic Emplotment and Self-Narration: Reconceptualizing Narrative Identity Through Digital Technology* Simona Adinolfi
	What Machines Can't Hold: Consent, Trauma, and Ecclesial Responsibility Peter Marc Farrugia	*Regulating General-Purpose AI Under the EU AI Act: Challenges and Future Directions* Ioannis Revolidis

Abstracts

Name	Acosta, Benedicto
Affiliation	Universidad de Salamanca
Title	WHAT ABOUT THE MORALITY OF INVENTIONS IN PATENT SYSTEMS?
Abstract	Most patent codes recognize cases in which patentability would not be possible, not because of the "internal" characteristics of the invention (lack of novelty or lack of inventive step), but due to "external" characteristics, namely moral, social. There are usually two types of external limits: exceptions for inventions that violate ordre public, and inventions that violate morality. Some authors consider that these limitations of the States are reactive, since they only prevent certain technologies from being marketed. The positive "generation" of social value would occur, for instance, in patents that seek a more sustainable, more accessible technology or that aim to end inequalities, etc. While this active generation is increasingly studied, scholars have tended to underestimate cases involving external limitations. In this work I try to show, first, some limitations to patentability on grounds of external limits. I explain that these limits are normally interpreted very narrowly, specially at the European Patent Office. I argue that this restrictive interpretation is based on the idea that the patent system is neither designed nor staffed to evaluate ethical issues. The main aim of this work is to defend the convenience of this external limitations by arguing against the view of value-neutrality in patent regimes. The argument I develop to respond this view is inspirated both on the work of Langdon Winner (1981) and on the work of Sheila Jasanoff (2016) about the relation between values and technology in general. Finally, I discuss the challenge that these limitations (moral and public policy) pose to the harmonization of patent systems, and I also suggest ways of incorporating ethical reflection on patent systems. Proposals concerning activists, bioethicists or citizen-science approaches are widely discussed.

Name	Adinolfi, Simona
Affiliation	Ghent University, JLU University Giessen
Title	Algorithmic Emplotment and Self-Narration: Reconceptualizing Narrative Identity through Digital Technology
Abstract	Twenty-first century literature is aware of the imbrications of digital technologies in the making of contemporary identities. In this talk, I will be examining the relationship between digital technologies and narrative identity depicted in two anglophone short stories. The short stories in question are Ted Chiang's "The Truth of Fact the Truth of Feeling" and Yan Ge's "How I Fell in Love with the Well-Documented Life of Alex Whelan". Both stories thematize the collection of personal life events through technology. The first one does it through the lens of speculative fiction, and through a search algorithm called Remem that supports a memory implant installed in people's brains. The other explores the affordances of Facebook in reconstructing a life story. Using Benjamin N. Jacobsen's idea of algorithmic emplotment and Jerome Bruner's work on narrative identity, I showcase how both short stories invite readers to consider how technology influences the way we construct the idea of self. I argue that both texts hint at the fact that the construction of a narrative identity in the contemporary world cannot do without digital technology anymore. This is due both to what Jacobsen calls the "anxiety of accuracy", meaning the fear of misremembering or forgetting crucial events in our lives and to the blurring of boundaries between human and technological nonhuman. In both stories, the distinction that philosopher Tiziana Terranova makes between "individual" (the idea of an autonomous and rational subject) and the dividual (their digital shadow made of data) becomes increasingly more difficult to pinpoint. In Chiang's short story, the blurring of the boundaries has implications for the reliability of the narrator and forces the character-narrator to completely revolutionize his narrative identity. In Ge's work, the identity of a stranger is pieced together and made narratively coherent through a social media platform.

Name	Attard, Matthew
Affiliation	University of Malta
Title	Drawing in a technologically mediated environment
Abstract	This paper investigates technologically mediated notions that emerge during the act of drawing via a speculative dialogue between human and non-human agencies. It departs from methodological posthuman techniques, such as interviewing objects, to propose a conversation that unfolds between two voices: a hand and a drawing machine. The paper's structure as a speculative dialogue seeks to explore the outcomes that arise at the intersection of the human and the technological, while simultaneously examining the boundaries that distinguish them through an oscillation of viewpoints. The work is informed by literary precedents such as Leonard E. Read's 1958 essay "I, Pencil: My Family Tree as Told to Leonard E. Read", in which an inanimate object narrates its own existence in the first person. Drawing inspiration from such narrative strategies, as well as from contemporary expectations of how we have grown accustomed to conversing with technology (for example, ChatGPT and Siri), the paper alternates first-person viewpoints between the drawing hand and the drawing machine, speculatively positioning both as agents capable of dialogue and critique. This subjective and performative framing proposes the practice of drawing as a conduit for an interrogative exploration of agency, authorship, and automation in technologically mediated environments.

Name	Bevan, David
Affiliation	St Martin's Institute Malta & King's College London
Title	Moral agency and technological mediation
Abstract	With elaborate, swift progress technology has gradually since the late 1960s entangled the developed world in an unavoidable web of mediation. Bank machines, personal computers, mobile telecommunications and the internet each now engaged with us and each other in a realisation of what was once considered science fiction. In philosophy meanwhile, in ethics and in questions of the moral agency of technology - along with the morality of business and institutions - has not kept up with that pace. Traditionally, a moral agent is a free person, of mature age, capable of making a decision to take an action and being held accountable for it. For Milton Friedman (1962) at least, the corporation is non-axiological: it is not a moral agency, even less an immoral one. It is an amoral actor that cannot take decisons about right and wrong. When you take employment with a company you are no longer a free moral agent: you have primordial duties to the firm's shareholders. For Levinas (1991) ethics can only arise between one individual and an other face-to-face. I have argued extensively elsewhere (2007) corporations should really accept this potentially bleak adiaphoria. In this presentation I introduce the case of the British Post Office and its relationship with over 600 sub-postmasters who between 1998 and 2014 faced legal action for theft. Unacknowldeged, nor publically admitted until 2014 was the fact that a software flaw in an accounting programme developed by Fujitsu was responsible for these losses. This scandal remains still unresolved although the British Government acknowledge sthe deficiencies of the Post Office and estimates the losses at over €!billion. How could such a case arise? How many other such cases have been covered up? If technology has assured its place in commercial society, how can we make it ethical?

Name	Calleja, Gilbert
Affiliation	University of Malta
Title	Vertov's Mechanical Eye and contemporary non-fiction storytelling
Abstract	In this presentation I will revisit Dziga Vertov's articulation of the mechanical eye (Kino eye, 1924) and explore its potential for the representation of lived experiences. I am particularly interested in the many ways Vertov's experiments a hundred years ago converse with new technologies. In my reading of Vertov's work I will focus on the notion of time, situated knowledge, the revelatory capabilities of creative editing (montage) techniques and their implications for ethnographic research. Starting with a close reading of Vertov's works I will then move on to a comparative analysis with the way anthropologists, documentary makers and scholars have employed creative audio-visual techniques as revelatory strategies in their preoccupation with representing the real. Discussing works by Jean Rouch, Chris Marker, Guy Debord, Adam Curtis, the Harvard Ethnographic lab and others, I will look at unorthodox editing techniques and the discussion surrounding new forms of ethnographic storytelling. Key to this discussion are considerations of the 'essayistic' form and the ensuing conflicting opinions surrounding notions of continuity and the rupturing of established forms of narrative structure in the representation of the real. In my discussion I will first focus on the interface of editing software and then move on to speculate on how photo, audio and video editing suites can influence a storyteller's understanding and manipulation of time. From this speculative exercise I return to Vertov's relationship with the camera - his camera - and its place in the world(s), real or otherwise to further the discussion on how new technologies complicate the relationship between the author, the story and the receivers and the many problems surrounding the way stories are produced, circulated and consumed.

Name	Charbadze, Sondra
Affiliation	SUNY Stony Brook
Title	Technē Before Text: On The Technology of Speech and Future Sense-Expanding Methodologies
Abstract	"Intellectuals, in particular literary intellectuals, are natural Luddites." So observed CP Snow in his provocative 1959 lecture on the two cultures of science and the humanities. But this "anti-technology" accusation is both too broad (for the obvious reason that not all "literary intellectuals" are natural Luddites) and not broad enough, as it excludes the long overlooked technologies of both speech and literacy. As literacy has been offered slightly more airtime, this paper focuses on speech as the founding technology of understanding, delineating its specific affordances and constraints, most crucially through its introduction of technological time and space. By tracing the technological as such to the overlooked technology of speech, it becomes clear that the human-technology divide has been co-constitutive from the beginning. This challenges the long philosophical tradition of defining the human by the capacity for speech (which in turn facilitates reason) as this very definition of the rational human in contrast to the animal, the savage, the woman, and now the technical is an activity facilitated by the technique of speech itself. Humans have always been both technologically-mediated and technologically constrained. While "literary intellectuals" cannot escape these constraints, we might explore phenomenological practices that augment sensory over technological intelligence. These sense-expanding methodologies are best developed and practiced in the humanities, populated by those very "literary intellectuals" that, far from being Luddites, remain closest to the founding technology of human speech. As opposed to the Luddite yearning to reclaim humanity through technological simplicity, sense-expanding methodologies must acknowledge that we cannot reclaim the human as opposed to the technological, as the non-technological is also the non-human (potentially, the post-human). However, we might diversify our access points to truth by developing mediated methodologies beyond the abstract binaries of speech and its countless technological derivatives.

Name	Chiriac, Denis
Affiliation	Moldova State University
Title	Becoming Homo Evolutus: Technological Mediation and the Ethics of the Transhumanist Future
Abstract	Contemporary philosophical debates regarding the transhumanist crisis and technological responses to it continue to critically examine concepts such as human autonomy, anthropological responsibility, and the ethics of technological intervention. Central to these philosophical explorations is the controversial notion of technological mediation, a complex category synthesizing techno-optimistic ideals and the dystopian realities of the post-human era. Deeply rooted in dialectical tensions, technological mediation represents a persistent philosophical aporia, embodying contradictions between ethical aspirations of human enhancement and their problematic implementation within existing power structures. Our research investigates the ontological foundations of the transition towards Homo evolutus (Verbeek 2011), the transhumanist ideal of the new human that transcends biological limitations through the integration of advanced technologies for cognitive enhancement, radical longevity, and physical augmentation. Through a philosophical lens, this analysis explores how intrinsic and instrumental values associated with different anthropological ontologies continue to be interpreted and contested in contemporary technopolitical discourses. Critical philosophical questions thus emerge: Can the transition towards Homo evolutus be appreciated as a theoretical construct holding intrinsic value independent of its biopolitical context? (Bostrom 2014; Savulescu 2019) How do contemporary philosophical frameworks help navigate the conceptual tension between utopian ideals of human enhancement and dystopian experiences of technological intervention? (Habermas 2003; Sandel 2021). Our study identifies three distinct ontological paradigms: instrumentalist ontology, which conceptualizes the human body as an object of technological manipulation; systemic ontology, which recognizes the limits of human control; and relational ontology, which challenges the nature-culture dualism. The analysis demonstrates that current debates are limited by the dominance of the instrumentalist perspective and the reduction of ethical problems to utilitarian calculations, marginalizing alternative ontologies and perpetuating colonial power structures in global governance of human enhancement.

Name	Collett, Guillaume
Affiliation	University of Malta
Title	Between Social Subjection and Machinic Enslavement
Abstract	Poststructuralists who use the notion of the 'machinic' to critique the modern – such as Foucault (1975, 1976), Deleuze and Guattari (1980), and Lazzarato (2014, 2019) – argue that human-machine entanglements function alongside, and do not simply replace or falsify, alienation (Cartesian dualism). Posthumanism and new materialism generally oppose these two forms of subjectivity (e.g. Latour, 1991) – what we can call machinic enslavement (entanglement) and social subjection (dualism) – privileging the analytical lens of the former over the Eurocentric colonial violence of the latter. However, machinic poststructuralism has shown that it is precisely within the juncture of these two forms of subjectivity that modern power functions. Dualism is not a flawed theoretical lens but rather an operative strategy at work in real material processes. And posthuman entanglements intertwine with these dualisms at the level of power's systemic effects, as much as they undo these dualisms at their own purely machinic level. I would argue that this level of power relations has largely been undertheorized and inadequately framed by posthumanist and new materialist analyses (e.g. Haraway, 1985; Barad, 2007). For these schools of thought, the capitalist 'mechanosphere' of machinic poststructuralism (comprising ongoing global cybernetic relations between machines and Cartesian subjects) appears to often be misidentified with 'nature' itself, considered as a self-organising process anterior to the all-too-human level of power relations (e.g. Grosz, 2002).

Name	Colman, Amy
Affiliation	University of Malta
Title	A post-humanist view of interpretation
Abstract	Artificial intelligence (AI) and Generative AI (GenAI) have ushered in a post-humanist era of technological co-agency, where human activity, creativity and cognition are increasingly entangled with algorithmic processes. AI- and GenAI-driven technologies have influenced virtually every academic and professional domain, including interpretation, where speech production can now be entrusted to tools powered by Large Language Models (LLMs), which enable machine interpretation. Machine interpretation (MI) refers to "automatic speech-to-text translation, speech-to-speech translation or spoken language translation" (Fantinuoli 2022, 517). MI is fully automated, thus rendering the presence of the human interpreter obsolete. While there are technological constraints, MI is no longer relegated to the realm of science fiction and it is already actively and fairly successfully used in low-stake everyday communication. In addition, investments in MI have increased considerably since 2019, and today interpreting technologies, including MI, are expected to affect the entire sector (Downie 2023, 277-278). MI is widely regarded as a significant threat to the profession as it has heralded a post-humanist view of interpretation. However, additional research is required on MI-generated output to analyse how semiotics, human intuition, empathy, and embodied world knowledge shape automated interpretation. In human interpretation, the interpreter's role fluctuates between non-participation and active participation (Pöllabauer 2015, 356). In the debate on the prospect of MI fully replacing human interpreters, emphasis should be placed on the position of the interpreter on this spectrum. If MI can fully and successfully replace human interpreters, is interpretation solely a mechanical process and is the human interpreter nothing but an invisible conduit? Research into the role of conference interpreters appears to contradict this, emphasising the interpreters' active participation in constructing meaning (Diriker 2004). The proposed talk aims to analyse the dichotomy between the visibility and invisibility of the interpreter, and its implications for the further evolution of the post-humanist era of interpretation.

Name	Debattista, Andre P. and Colombo, Christian
Affiliation	University of Malta
Title	Borderless Belonging: Re-Imagining the Nation-State after the Digital Revolution.
Abstract	The ongoing digital revolution, far from being a mere technological shift, is profoundly unsettling the foundations of modern political life, compelling a re-evaluation of concepts long considered stable. Among the institutions most significantly challenged is the nation-state, the dominant political structure of the past few centuries, supposedly designed to guarantee rights and demarcate duties as well as protect political, social and economic interests within clearly demarcated and legally-recognised territories. The idea of the "nation" is a fairly recent creation – a product of both the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution and the emergence of vernacular languages as languages of power. Anderson (1983) places considerable emphasis on imagination, describing the nation as being "an imagined political community"; imagined as "both inherently limited and sovereign." Nations are dependent on "official nationalisms" and narratives to justify their existence though, their existence still depends on several factors including a political community, shared institutions, a code of rights and duties, a definite social space and a "well-demarcated and bounded territory, with which the members identify and to which they feel they belong" (Smith, 1991). Though often used interchangeably, the State differs in that it has a legal character, it can use violence legitimately and it can legally demand obedience from its citizens. The state is also the principal guarantor of citizenship, thus determining who has access to resources, who can participate in political life, and who has access to social instruments of solidarity. In a world characterised by frictionless data flows, platform-mediated power, and collective challenges that inherently defy national borders, this essay undertakes a philosophical and civic exploration of the digital revolution, arguing that the conditions fostered by digital technologies necessitate a fundamental rethinking of belonging, participation, and recognition. The very logic of the nation-state, predicated on territorial control and sovereign authority within fixed boundaries, appears increasingly mismatched with the deterritorialised, fluid, and transnational logic of digital networks. This mismatch generates an inherent tension, suggesting that the conflicts and governance challenges observed are not temporary issues but fundamental consequences of attempting to apply old paradigms to new realities.

Name	Ellul, Joshua
Affiliation	University of Malta
Title	Breaking down The Techno-Regulatory Walls between Decentralised Techno-Communities and Real-World Supra/National Governing Structures
Abstract	Since the early days of the Internet, an ideological chasm emerged between "the system" and various online digital communities including: free and open software and digital artefacts activists; hacktivists and phreakers; and cyberpunks, cypherpunks, crypto-anarchists. Over time the ideological chasm narrowed, yet the release of Bitcoin's white paper in 2008, and what would follow for cryptocurrencies and decentralised technologies, may have not only reinvigorated the ideological chasm — but also led to a techno-legal architectural chasm. Whilst it may seem that recent inter/national regulatory developments have filled the techno-regulatory gap introduced through the emergence of cryptocurrencies and crypto-service providers, including attempts to provide frameworks better suited for decentralised organisations, the techn-legal architectural chasm still exists. In this talk, the existing chasm will be discussed and avenues towards filling the chasm will be explored.

Name	Farrugia, Peter Marc
Affiliation	University of Malta
Title	What Machines Can't Hold: Consent, Trauma, and Ecclesial Responsibility
Abstract	This paper explores the implications of technologically mediated disclosure within Church safeguarding systems, focusing on the role of human presence in processes increasingly shaped by digital tools and AI-supported platforms. Drawing on trauma-informed clinical practice, safeguarding policy (Vos Estis Lux Mundi, Malta's 2024 Safeguarding Policy), and theological reflections on personhood (Antiqua et Nova, 2024), the paper argues that disclosure is not merely a procedural step but a profoundly human act that demands enduring presence. The analysis contrasts the efficiency and accessibility offered by digital systems with their limitations in responding to trauma. While such systems can receive and record disclosures, they cannot hold space, offer affective attunement, or sustain the kind of relational depth that healing requires. Even when supported by human oversight, technologically mediated responses risk replacing accompaniment with administration. The paper proposes an ethic of safeguarding presence: one that understands the Church's task not only as protecting the vulnerable but as remaining with them, even (and especially) when they cannot return. It contends that presence is not a feature of good practice, but a theological and pastoral imperative that evades automation. Through this lens, the paper contributes to wider discussions on how technology shapes human relations, ecclesial responsibility, and the limits of mediated care in institutional contexts. It argues for digital systems that support but do not replace the irreducibly human act of accompaniment.

Name	Fenech, Christopher
Affiliation	University of Malta
Title	Narratives of Progress, Figures of Exclusion: Inequality in the Age of Enhancement
Abstract	Human Enhancement Technologies (HETs) promise to reshape the conditions of human existence, offering possibilities of heightened intelligence, physical ability, and longevity. Yet such promises are accompanied by risks of an intensification of social inequalities. This paper investigates HETs, the general public's accessibility to them, and subsequent ramifications of accessibility or the lack thereof, through the lens of Jean-François Lyotard's reflections on justice and injustice, particularly his concern with the différend (the situation where a wrong cannot be articulated within the dominant discourse). I identify possible différends among people's different ideas on the appropriateness and acceptability of HETs, while also arguing that HETs produce new différends, as those excluded from access may be unable to frame their disadvantage in terms recognized as legitimate by technologically privileged groups. The emergence of "enhanced" subjects may also recalibrate norms of capability, rendering the unenhanced not merely disadvantaged but redefined as deficient within the social imagination. Drawing on Lyotard's suspicion of grand narratives and his commitment to the recognition of heterogeneity, I maintain that discourses of universal progress or "inevitable" enhancement function as legitimating narratives that obscure the injustices of exclusion. My analysis highlights how unequal access to enhancement cannot be reduced to distributive inequity alone but can also be understood as a silencing of voices unable to contest their marginalisation within the prevailing political and technoscientific paradigm. The paper concludes by proposing that social justice in the age of enhancement requires vigilance against such silencing, cultivating institutional spaces where incommensurable claims of both enhanced and unenhanced individuals can be heard without being subsumed under any homogenising narratives, such as that of progress.

Name	Galea, Matthew
Affiliation	University of Malta
Title	Notes on Practice: The Studio as Technology (draft)
Abstract	This paper explores the studio as a primary technology in the generation of artistic practice, framing tools and instruments as "levers on the world" that amplify material and conceptual agency. Beginning with a personal reflection on tool-making and the material intelligence embedded in practice, the discussion interrogates the distinction between the notions of technology, tools and instruments, positioning the studio as a constellation of processes rather than a fixed site. The text then examines the conceptual relationship between tool-making, technology and magic, drawing on thinkers such as Clarke, Heidegger, Cassirer, Flusser, Latour, and Burnham to argue that these domains share structural affinities in their opacity, ritualised operations, and promise of transformation. Building on these reflections, the text introduces the notion of inverse or negative use of technology; a strategy of deploying tools against their conventional telos to unlock latent potential. Through an understanding of a 'negative' or empty force similar the Japanese concept of MA (間) when understood as negative space, the text frames negative production as a generative interval: an emptiness that binds processes, gestures, and material relations. By situating contemporary artistic practice within this expanded framework; between lever and incantation, optimisation and the aesthetics of failure, the studio emerges as both a technological apparatus and a magical circle, mediating the negotiation between material, thought and form.

Name	Leonard, Jane and Pace, Gordon, J.
Affiliation	Bendigo Kangan Institute, Australia and University of Malta
Title	Technology-Mediated Conversations as Collaborative Visual Poetry
Abstract	In this talk, we argue how technology-mediated conversations produce artifacts that qualify as visual poetry. We start by identifying characteristics of the genre of visual poetry, based upon which we assert that technology-mediated conversations have the necessary features to qualify in this category. In contrast, we contend how, lacking the intermediate technological-medium, such artifacts would not necessarily qualify. We highlight that (i) our focus is on conversations – informal communication in the form of an ongoing exchange, in a manner that promotes connection and understanding through unfolding process of feedback and response; and that (ii) we use the term visual poetry in the wider sense of a symbiosis of combining literary and visual elements, as opposed to the more limiting concrete poetry, which uses typographic elements to visually enhance or create poetry. Technology-mediated conversations. We will present a brief overview of how conversations have changed in in "an age of mechanical reproduction" (Benjamin, 1935), across various dimensions, including form (e.g. the increase in the use of multimodal components), capabilities (e.g. enabling mediation across temporal and spatial disparities), composition style (e.g. impromptu vs. premeditated), and in the nature of the artifact itself (e.g. becoming more reproducible). We acknowledge the historically changing definitions, understanding and perception of the key terms, particularly those of conversation, poetry and technology, but also the long history of grappling with the impact of developments in technology on art and connection (e.g. Benjamin 35, Ihde 79, Dencker 2000). Visual poetry. We will then present the characteristics of visual poetry, as (sporadically) discussed in the literature, but perhaps more importantly as adopted by artist practitioners through specific examples of such artistic artifacts. Based on these foundational definitions, we will then go on to demonstrate how aspects, and actual examples of technology-mediated conversations qualify as instances of visual poetry, and contrast with how different forms of non-technology mediated conversations succeed or fail to qualify based on the identified characteristics. As a final consideration, we highlight how new technologies are heralding a transition from an age of mechanical reproduction to an age of mechanical production, and briefly discuss the potential impact on, as well as extrapolate possible futures, of technological-mediated conversations, and its characterisation as visual poetry.

Name	Marliin, Jacque
Affiliation	Radboud Universiteit
Title	Some issues with the human-technology indistinction in postphenomenology
Abstract	Postphenomenology is a discipline which seeks to inquire into the relationship between humans and technology. Thinkers such as Ihde, Rosenberger, and Verbeek have resorted to making sense of this relationship by stipulating an inter-relational ontology which pre-exists any phenomenal subject-object distinction. What this means is that humans and technology have always already been indistinct, and that to be intertwined with technology has always been part of the human condition. It is precisely this indistinction that allows technology to mediate human experience with the world. In this paper, I take issue with the human-technology indistinction as specified within postphenomenology. My goal is to flesh out the core principles that make up postphenomenology's ontology in order to reveal an inherent inconsistency. Briefly put, I argue that technology is ultimately defined as something distinct from the human in order for it to mediate the human with the world, yet this contradicts postphenomenology's ultimate claim towards a human-technology indistinction. Following this demonstration, I will elaborate on the ways in which this inconsistency spells difficulties for making complete sense of the human-technology entanglement from within a postphenomenological perspective. Following that, I will conclude my paper by briefly suggesting two alternative ways of defining technology. The first will be an object oriented approach that seeks to make sense of technological artefacts independently of their relations to humans. The second will be to follow the logic of postphenomenology I have spelled out to its logical conclusion by arguing that the task of making sense of technology in ontological terms should be relinquished, and, at most, seek a pragmatic definition of what is meant when the word 'technology' is used colloquially.

Name	Nguyen, Luca and Moncada, Stefano
Affiliation	Islands and Small States Institute - University of Malta
Title	When Regulations Become Code: AI, Agency, and the Mediation of Governance
Abstract	As artificial intelligence increasingly mediates our interaction with complex systems, its role in shaping human agency and institutional power requires critical scrutiny. This paper examines the development of COMPLY, an AI-driven regulatory compliance platform developed at the Islands and Small States Institute of the University of Malta, designed to guide businesses through EU regulatory frameworks by translating legal texts into structured and accessible workflows. While COMPLY seeks to reduce administrative burden and improve regulatory adherence, its existence raises broader questions about algorithmic governance and the redistribution of agency and responsibility between humans and machines. Who interprets the law when its logic is embedded in AI systems? How should user context and situated practices be accounted for? And how might automated guidance reshape the relationships between regulators, businesses, and the wider public? Drawing on insights from the platform's design process and semi-structured interviews with experts, regulators and pilot users, the paper explores the challenges of converting ambiguous legal language into operational logic. These findings highlight the persistent tension between efficiency and accountability in technologically mediated governance. By situating this applied case within debates on technological mediation and algorithmic governance, it is argued that AI systems can potentially do more than support decision-making: they might participate in redefining the boundaries of expertise, compliance, and responsibility. Ultimately, the paper invites a critical conversation on whether embedding law in code enhances or diminishes human autonomy, and on the ethical considerations that must guide the design of such systems.

Name	Pisani, Maria
Affiliation	University of Malta
Title	All cyborgs are equal. Some are more equal than others
Abstract	My presentation will begin by recounting a tale of two Sophias. Baby Sophia was born in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, barely recognised as fully human. Sophia the cyborg, is a humanoid robot who has been invited to speak at conferences and events worldwide. She became the first robot to be granted citizenship. Artificial intelligence is already making life and death decision on behalf of the human species, and many fear its potential to disrupt jobs, democracy and human autonomy. And yet it strikes me that baby Sophia may have more reason to be terrified of people who generally look like me, people who refuse to recognize her humanity. So, what does it mean to be human? What are the values that shape our relationship with each other, with technology and the planet? Drawing on the work of critical posthuman feminists, I position the human species, and particularly young people, as mediated beings - already human and machine - bodies merged with technology and enmeshed within economic and material relations that are driven by the logic of advanced capitalism and the maximization of profit. We are cyborgs. Intimacy, mental health and the possibilities for human and planetary wellbeing, are all embedded in relationships that are more-than-human. Young people's lives, their understanding and experience of intimacy, relationships and life are entangled with, mediated through and shaped by a range of events, experiences and actors, including humans, algorithms, data and feelings, and broader social structures of inequality and violence. We exist, we suffer, and we thrive within these relationships, with those close to us, and those we will never meet. But what are the values that frame these relationships? I approach this question as an academic, and as a youth worker and ask, what are the implications for youth work praxis?

Name	Possati, Luca
Affiliation	University of Twente
Title	The Technology Lifecycle: Toward a Phenomenological Account of Subjectivity
Abstract	This paper develops a richer perspective on how subjectivity shapes—and is shaped by—our interactions with technology. We proceed in two parts. First, we argue that traditional postphenomenological mediation theories, rooted in functionalist and instrumentalist views, cannot fully account for subjectivity. Rather than discarding postphenomenology, we propose reinvigorating it by returning to the phenomenological foundations laid by Don Ihde. Second, we broaden mediation theory via a "technology lifecycle" model. This framework retains attention to functionality and design while explicitly incorporating two additional and equally important dimensions: breakdown and maintenance. To illuminate these moments, we adopt a Ricoeur-inspired lens distinguishing the "designer-user" subject from the "non-technological" subject, whose focus is care and upkeep. By reexamining and extending postphenomenology in this way, we offer a more nuanced understanding of the technological subject, which lies at the heart of our inquiry.

Name	Revolidis, Ioannis
Affiliation	University of Malta
Title	Regulating General-Purpose AI under the EU AI Act: Challenges and Future Directions
Abstract	The regulation of General Purpose Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) systems under European Union (EU) law is an emerging and rapidly developing field of scholarship and policy. The adoption of the EU Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act) marks a decisive step in establishing a harmonised regulatory framework for artificial intelligence technologies across Europe. While "EU law" encompasses a broad range of instruments, this paper concentrates on the AI Act as the central legislative measure, while also drawing on the Digital Services Act (DSA) in instances where content regulation intersects with AI governance. The submission first situates GPAI systems within the broader logic of the AI Act, emphasising the reliance of the Act on a risk-based classification model that seeks to differentiate between applications according to their potential societal and individual impact. It further explores provisions on transparency, accountability, and traceability, which are particularly relevant for GPAI, given their wide-ranging and often unpredictable applications. Special attention is paid to the new obligations imposed on providers of GPAI models, who are required to ensure technical documentation, disclosure of training data, and compliance with safeguards against systemic risks. Ultimately, the paper argues that while the AI Act constitutes a pioneering regulatory effort, its effectiveness will depend on its adaptability to technological change and its integration with broader frameworks of fundamental rights and the rule of law. The code of practice on GPAI will be an important part of this discussion. A balanced approach is required—one that safeguards innovation while ensuring that AI systems serve democratic and human-centered values within the European Union.

Name	Tambassi, Timothy
Affiliation	Ca' Foscari University of Venice
Title	A Two-Dimensional Framework for Information Preservation: From XML–Prolog Transformations to Human–Technology Entanglements
Abstract	This paper addresses the problem of information preservation in the translation of XML documents into Prolog, taking as a case study the transformations generated by contemporary AI chatbots. What may appear as a technical question—whether comments and formal data should be preserved as equivalent informational units—reveals deeper methodological and philosophical implications. In XML, content and comment belong to distinct strata: structure versus annotation. Yet when re-coded into Prolog, both are elevated to the same ontological status, becoming explicit facts. The situation becomes more intricate once we consider Prolog's Closed-World Assumption, which turns the absence of a fact into implicit information. This analysis proposes a two-dimensional framework that distinguishes four scenarios of preservation, only one of which ensures a faithful correspondence between source and target. Such a framework demonstrates that "information" is not a neutral or purely syntactic entity: it is co-constituted by the semantic assumptions of the languages and environments in which it circulates. Placed in the broader context of technologically mediated relations, the case study illustrates how AI systems are not mere conveyors of information but active participants in shaping what counts as information, and therefore in shaping human epistemic practices. By elevating comments to facts or by enforcing closed-world logics, these systems enact implicit ontological decisions. This raises questions about the agency of technology in structuring knowledge and about the extent to which human assumptions are inscribed, transformed, or destabilized by computational processes. More broadly, the proposed methodology highlights how translations across technical formats embody philosophical commitments, thereby offering a lens through which to rethink the human/technology relation: not as one of external mediation but of entangled co-construction, where informational identity itself emerges from the interplay of human design and technological agency.

Name	URUK, Ahmet
Affiliation	Gümüşhane University
Title	Beyond Corporeality, Identity, and Mortality: Transhumanism in Pat Cadigan's Synners
Abstract	Coined by Julian Huxley in 1957 in New Bottles for New Wine, 'transhumanism' is an intellectual and philosophical movement that prioritizes the application of technology and science to exceed natural limitations of humanity and promotes the tendency to embrace the radical development of intelligence, well-being, and intelligence of human beings. Transhumanism, heralded, by many, to be the condensed form of Enlightenment humanism and rationalism, aims to eradicate human suffering, extend life span, annihilate death, and remove aging. In order to go beyond human realm and establish a perfected mankind, transhumanism promotes the construction and acceleration of super intelligent machines, space colonization, and technological singularity. Based mostly on exponential technology and convergence such as nanotechnology, biotechnology, genetic engineering, and artificial intelligence with the aim of engendering the posthuman condition, what transhumanism proposes is the establishment of a technology-driven society where human beings exceed the so-called underdeveloped condition of Homo sapiens. Accordingly, cyberpunk, a subgenre of science fiction, serves as an imaginary platform in which the principles of transhumanism become possible and are normalized. Likewise, Pat Cadigan's novel titled Synners, published in 1991, focuses upon the transhumanist development of posthuman bodies and virtual reality within a digital world and exposes the dehumanizing impacts of high technology through neural interfaces, the stroke virus, and a hacker culture. Thus, this paper examines Cadigan's Synners by emphasizing the dehumanization of human-technology symbiosis and the commodification of identity, body, and experience in a technologically mediated society by means of a transhumanist framework. Keywords: Transhumanism, Pat Cadigan, Synners, Dehumanization, High Technology

Name	White, Ben
Affiliation	University of Sussex
Title	Techno-wantons: Adaptive Technology and the Will of Tomorrow
Abstract	This paper presents a provocative argument: some highly adaptive technologies, such as the recommender systems on social media platforms, can temporarily undermine our personhood. Put another way, I argue that users of these systems can, for a time, quite literally lose their status as persons. This is presented as a novel and peculiar type of harm posed by adaptive smart technology—one that corrodes or undermines our deep, reflexive agentive capacities. I frame this as one way emergent technologies will reshape human agency, as cognitive capacities like attention, creativity, and goal formation are increasingly distributed across brain-technology systems. These new shapes of agency are, as yet, poorly understood and should be a major focus of new work in the field of human-AI interaction. The specific features of these technologies, the capacities they distribute, and the social and political contexts in which they're embedded, will dictate the outcomes these new distributed agentive shapes produce. To make my argument about personhood, agency, and adaptive algorithms, I draw from Harry Frankfurt's work on personhood and desire. Frankfurt famously introduced the notion of the "wanton" to describe an agent acting solely on the basis of "first-order desires." The wanton is contrasted with the "person," whose desires can be of the second order (i.e., persons can want to want X, and can therefore prefer their desires were otherwise). Desires of the first order - instinctive, unreflective preferences - are not subject to metacognitive control. I argue that adaptive digital platforms can be designed to wield variables like novelty and friction in ways that paralyse metacognitive control, temporarily reducing us to wantons by disabling effective second-order desires. For Frankfurt, wantons are not persons. I thus draw a strong conclusion that individuals in a state of technologically scaffolded "wantonness" are, temporarily, not persons in the philosophical sense.

Name	Xu, Lufeng
Affiliation	École des hautes études en sciences sociales
Title	Rethinking André Leroi-Gourhan's Theory of "Technical Symbiosis": The More-Than-Human Diversity of Technical Milieu
Abstract	Throughout human evolutionary history, symbiosis and technology have consistently resonated across diverse dimensions. Originally, symbiosis was a biological concept describing interdependent relationships formed between different species through prolonged interaction. This relationship manifests in various forms, encompassing mutual benefit, unilateral advantage, or even parasitism. Its essence, however, lies in altering the survival state of each entity through such connection. As this biological concept gradually permeated the humanities and social sciences, symbiosis extended to encompass the interactive states within humanity itself, between humans and their environment, and between humans and technology. Thus, symbiosis transcended purely natural boundaries, becoming a framework for understanding complex relationships. In this context, the French technologist and prehistoric ethnologist André Leroi-Gourhan delved deeply into the concept of symbiosis within the technical milieu. He discerned a profound connection between the two: technology is not merely a means for humanity to conquer nature, but also a medium through which symbiotic relationships are formed between humans and nature, and between humans and non-humans. The complexity of these symbiotic relationships, in turn, drives the continuous evolution and replication of technology. In this sense, the technical milieu is not merely a backdrop, but a condition of existence. Technology ceases to be solely a tool in human hands, becoming instead an integral component of the human-non-human community. With the aim of reconceptualizing the relationship between technology and the milieu, my paper will reexamine Leroi-Gourhan's theory of "technical symbiosis", particularly concerning the transformation of technology between internal and external environments. I will demonstrate that technology itself can become part of an ecosystem, forming novel symbiotic patterns with non-human life forms. This constitutes the profound ontological "more-than-human" shift precipitated by "technical symbiosis".

Name	Zammit, François
Affiliation	University of Malta
Title	Tell me who I am
Abstract	New technologies like wearable technologies and other data collection devices, collect, measure, and process this data to provide the wearer and user with easily interpretable information about themselves. These technologies provide the individual with a deeper and better understanding of themselves. Previously, this form of self-knowledge was the monopoly of authorities like medical professionals, who collected, measured and interpreted this data for us. This implies that at face value we have a direct and unobstructed reading of ourselves. However, is this the case? Do we really have direct access to ourselves? How has this new way of understanding affected our self-knowledge?