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PROGRAMME AND BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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Socialist Children's Literature through the Lens of AI

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WORKSHOP
Socialist Children's Literature through the Lens of AI
November 6, 2026, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Computer and Information Science (UL FRI), Ljubljana, Slovenia

PROGRAMME AND BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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AI4DH CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE IN AI FOR DIGITAL HUMANITIES

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP
Cultural Memory, Public Spheres and Social Media

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WORKSHOP
Socialist Children's Literature through the Lens of AI

CONCEPT

Fairy tales and children's literature convey moral values, construct models of social relations, and help shape collective identities and cultural memory. In socialist societies, children's literature was an important medium for communicating political ideals, representations of history, and visions of the future to younger generations. Yet the ways in which these meanings were embedded in narrative structures, characters, motifs, and illustrations, and how they changed over time, require further investigation.

The workshop focuses primarily on the research project *Fairy Tales of Socialism: Research Methodology Development and Test Case Studies* (SocTales, ARIS N6-0471), which investigates the ideological and cultural functions of socialist children's literature. It focuses on the Slovenian children's magazine *Ciciban* and other selected publications from the socialist period. The workshop research examines cultural policy and the historical conditions of literary production, the representation of the Second World War and its enemies, the role of animals in naturalizing political ideology, and the construction of social values and models of communal life.

A key objective of SocTales is to develop an interdisciplinary methodology for analyzing fairy-tale narratives. The proposed approach combines structural semiotics, cultural and historical interpretation, and computational methods, particularly large language models (LLMs). It explores conceptual mapping at three interconnected levels: narrative motifs, political concepts and values, and broader cultural narratives. Integrating textual and visual analysis is also central to understanding how ideological meanings are constructed and communicated.

Beyond its focus on socialist children's literature, the workshop brings together research from related projects exploring the possibilities of LLM-assisted narrative analysis. These contributions address identifying folkloric motifs

and tale types, applying Greimas's semiotic square, and analyzing mythological narratives and conflict resolution. They provide opportunities to examine the methodological potential and limitations of AI-assisted approaches across different narrative genres and historical contexts.

The workshop is conceived as a forum to present ongoing research, discuss preliminary findings, and critically evaluate emerging methodological approaches. It will also provide an opportunity to discuss the scope of future case studies, possibilities for comparative research, and the involvement of international collaborators. The aim is to strengthen interdisciplinary cooperation and establish shared methodological foundations for the next stages of research.

WORKSHOP
Socialist Children's Literature through the Lens of AI

PROGRAMME

Location: UL FRI, SS3 (meeting room, 3rd floor)

November 6, 2026, from 08:45 to 13:00

Zoom: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81019570802?pwd=dUJmQnRmMER0M-W13RU8zQk02dGI3QT09

08:45 - 09:00	Get-together and welcome coffee
09:00 - 10:40	**PANEL 1: BUILDING SOCIALIST SOCIETY AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF WWII IN CICIBAN** • **Polona TRATNIK**: Welcome and introduction to the project SocTales • **Lučka ŽNIDARŠIČ**: *Cultural Policy and Socialist Children's Fairy Tales in Slovenia* • **Marjan HORVAT, Jure KORAŽIJA, Polona TRATNIK**: *Proto-Political Imaginaries of Social Order in Community-Oriented Folktales: An LLM-Based Analysis* • **Tjaša ARČON, Urška LAMPE, Polona TRATNIK**: *Representations of the Enemy in World War II Narratives in Ciciban (1945–1991): A Diachronic Analysis* • **Tjaša ARČON, Jasmina REJEC, Polona TRATNIK**: *When Nature Takes Sides: The Naturalization of Political Ideology in Slovenian Children's Wartime Narratives*

10:30 - 10:40	Discussion
10:40 - 11:10	Coffee break
11:10 - 12:50	**PANEL 2: LLM APPROACHES TO NARRATIVE ANALYSIS** • **Darko DAROVEC, Jure KORAŽIJA**: *Marriage and Exile: Myths of Conflict Resolution in the Earliest Accounts of the Americas* • **Jan BABNIK, Rebeka KROPIVŠEK LESKOVAR, Polona TRATNIK**: *Exploring the Semiotic Square for LLM-Based Narrative Analysis* • **Karim EL HAFF**: *Motifs and Tale Types: An Agentic Approach to Automatic Detection and Cross-Mapping* • **Rebeka KROPIVŠEK LESKOVAR, Marko ROBNIK ŠIKONJA, Polona TRATNIK**: *Data-Driven Discovery of Character Archetypes in Text and Film* • **Polona TRATNIK**: *Mapping Fairy Tales with LLMs: Towards a Methodology for SocTales*
12:50 - 13:00	Next meeting plans and wrap-up

WORKSHOP
Socialist Children's Literature through the Lens of AI

ABSTRACTS

Lučka ŽNIDARŠIČ (Institute IRRIS & University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts)

CULTURAL POLICY AND SOCIALIST CHILDREN'S FAIRY TALES IN SLOVENIA

As a set of institutional mechanisms, norms, and practices, cultural policy establishes the social conditions of cultural production, distribution, and reception, and thus co-determines who can create, which works reach the public, and what meanings these works acquire in society. In the case of socialist fairy tales, it influenced the selection of tales, their illustrations, and the ways children were expected to read them. The research will focus on the period between 1945 and 1952, when the Ministry of Education and the party's agitprop apparatus directed the cultural field, and Soviet-style socialist realism served as the official aesthetic principle in the first postwar years. After the 1948 split with the Cominform, cultural policy gradually changed. In 1952, agitprop was abolished, and Miroslav Krleža advocated creative freedom at the writers' congress in Ljubljana. Mladinska knjiga and the children's magazine *Ciciban*, both founded in 1945, will serve as the basis for examining editorial policy, the selection of texts and illustrations, and the ideological guidelines within which fairy tales held an ambivalent position. Their magical and supernatural elements conflicted with the demands of socialist realism, yet as part of folk tradition, fairy tales could be

selected, reinterpreted, and adapted to new values. The historical part of the research will define key periods, work with primary sources, and map the institutional network that produced children's literature. On this basis, the research will trace political concepts and values in cultural policy documents of the time and examine how to incorporate them into the SocTales project's three-level analysis. It will provide textual and visual analysis of socialist fairy tales within a historical and cultural-political framework, along with analytical concepts drawn from the period's material that enable a historically grounded reading of texts and illustrations.

Marjan HORVAT (Institute IRRIS), **Jure KORAŽIJA** (Institute IRRIS), **Polona TRATNIK** (Institute IRRIS & University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Computer and Information Science)

PROTO-POLITICAL IMAGINARIES OF SOCIAL ORDER IN COMMUNITY-ORIENTED FOLKTALES: AN LLM-BASED ANALYSIS

Community-oriented folktales articulate different normative models of social organization through the principles of inclusion, contribution, solidarity, responsibility, and the distribution of collective resources. Even when narrative structures remain largely stable, variations in character roles, value hierarchies, and conflict resolution may produce substantially different proto-political orientations. Our research explores how large language models (LLMs) can identify and compare these orientations across narrative variants, moving beyond detecting isolated values to reconstructing implicit models of social order. Drawing on variants of The Ant and the Grasshopper, The House of the Fly, and The Giant Turnip, we move toward a comparative approach informed by Inglehart's theory of cultural change and value orientations.

Tjaša ARČON (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Computer and Information Science), **Urška LAMPE** (Institute IRRIS), **Polona TRATNIK** (Institute IRRIS & University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Computer and Information Science)

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE ENEMY IN WORLD WAR II NARRATIVES IN CICIBAN (1945–1991): A DIACHRONIC ANALYSIS

Representations of World War II in children's literature play an important role in shaping cultural memory, particularly in societies marked by conflicting interpretations of the past. Focusing on the Slovenian children's magazine Ciciban between 1945 and 1991, we investigate how external and internal enemies were represented in narratives of World War II and how these representations changed over time.

Using automated stem-based keyword matching, we identified potentially relevant narratives through a set of selected Slovenian word stems referring to wartime actors. The next stage of the research will focus on identifying and analyzing narratives featuring antagonists. We will examine who is represented as an enemy, how enemies are characterized, what actions are attributed to them, and why they are presented as enemies. We will also investigate the goals attributed to the Partisans and the conflicts in which they are involved.

The diachronic analysis will examine the frequency of wartime narratives and enemy representations across the publication period, changes in their identification and characterization, and possible shifts in wartime rhetoric. By combining LLM-assisted analysis with historical interpretation, we aim to identify patterns and transformations in wartime representations and contribute to a better understanding of how cultural memory of World War II was constructed and reproduced through Slovenian children's literature during the socialist period.

Tjaša ARČON (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Computer and Information Science), **Jasmina REJEC** (Institute IRRIS & University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts), **Polona TRATNIK** (Institute IRRIS & University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Computer and Information Science)

WHEN NATURE TAKES SIDES: THE NATURALIZATION OF POLITICAL IDEOLOGY IN SLOVENIAN CHILDREN'S WARTIME NARRATIVES

Animals in children's literature frequently carry moral, cultural, and political meanings. This study examines how animal figures in wartime narratives published in the Slovenian children's magazine Ciciban between 1945 and 1991 contributed to the naturalization of political ideologies and the construction of collective memory of the Second World War. Rather than focusing on animal allegories representing human societies, the study investigates narratives in which animals interact with human characters situated within identifiable historical and political contexts.

Drawing on Roland Barthes's theory of myth as a second-order semiological system, the study explores how historically contingent political meanings acquire the appearance of naturalness through the narrative involvement of animals. Animal characters may function as helpers, protectors, witnesses, or companions whose actions affirm particular political values and interpretations of the past.

The research employs a large language model (LLM)-assisted approach to identify and analyze these representations in a diachronic corpus of *Ciciban* narratives. The analytical framework distinguishes three interconnected levels: narrative motifs (micro), political concepts and values (meso), and broader cultural narratives (macro). It combines identifying traditional and transformed folkloric motifs with analyzing animal roles, human–animal relationships, and ideological meanings. The approach also uses thematic clustering to identify recurring patterns and potential historical shifts in how animals are represented and in their political functions.

Preliminary methodological testing has highlighted challenges related to OCR quality, entity identification, textual evidence, and the risk of ideological overinterpretation, emphasizing the importance of human validation. By combining structural-semiotic analysis, folklore studies, and

computational methods, the study seeks to explain how animal figures helped present historically situated political narratives as natural and morally self-evident, thereby participating in the construction and reproduction of collective memory.

Darko DAROVEC (Institute IRRIS) & **Jure KORAŽIJA** (Institute IRRIS)

MARRIAGE AND EXILE: MYTHS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE EARLIEST ACCOUNTS OF THE AMERICAS

Myths preserve implicit models of social order. They express how conflict, exclusion, and the transformation of relationships can contribute to the renewal of communal life. Our presentation treats marriage and exile as mythic forms of social transformation, drawing on early accounts of Indigenous American traditions. It is part of a broader comparative study of customary conflict resolution in Europe and the Americas, which examines the hypothesis of a recurring three-phase ritual structure of approach, mediated suspension, and transformation. The study uses a large language model (LLM) as a search tool. It scans a multilingual corpus of historical, legal, and ethnographic texts, flags passages that may describe ritualized conflict resolution, and sorts them into categories for closer analysis. We combine this LLM-assisted analysis with expert validation and close reading to investigate how recurring ritual structures can be identified across culturally distinct traditions and how mythological narratives clarify the relationship between conflict resolution, communal values, and social order.

Jan BABNIK (Institute IRRIS), **Rebeka Kropivšek LESKOVAR** (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Computer and Information Science), **Polona TRATNIK** (Institute IRRIS & University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Computer and Information Science)

EXPLORING THE SEMIOTIC SQUARE FOR LLM-BASED NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

The presentation explores the potential of Greimas's semiotic square as a framework for LLM-based narrative analysis. Using a small corpus of tales, we experiment with identifying fundamental axiological oppositions, constructing their relations of contrariety and contradiction, and interpreting the resulting elementary terms and conjunctive configurations. A multi-stage procedure distinguishes the construction of semantic structures from the assessment of their explicit or implicit realization and subsequent textual grounding. Preliminary results are considered in relation to axiological openness, narrative complexity, and possible patterns of conflict articulation and resolution, including interactions between social and individual value systems. The presentation is exploratory, with particular attention to the interpretative possibilities and methodological limitations of LLM-assisted structural semiotic analysis.

Karim EL HAFF (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Computer and Information Science)

MOTIFS AND TALE TYPES: AN AGENTIC APPROACH TO AUTOMATIC DETECTION AND CROSS-MAPPING

Tales are cataloged by type in the Aarne–Thompson–Uther index (ATU) and by motif in the Thompson Motif-Index (TMI). The two catalogs refer to each other: Uther's type entries cite motifs, and Thompson's motif entries cite types. This project investigates whether evidence from the tales themselves can complement these references.

The project develops an LLM agent that, given a tale, identifies the TMI motifs it contains, quotes the passage that supports each, and assigns the tale to an ATU type.

The agent is applied to a collection of tales that already carry ATU type labels. For each type, the detected motifs are aggregated to show how often each motif occurs among tales of that type and how widely motifs vary within it; these distributions are then visualized. The resulting motif ranges are compared with the motifs the catalogs list for the same types. The expected outcome is a tool for detecting motifs and types in tales, and a data-driven description of the motifs within each type.

Rebeka KROPIVŠEK LESKOVAR (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Computer and Information Science), **Marko ROBNIK ŠIKONJA** (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Computer and Information Science), **Polona TRATNIK** (Institute IRRIS & University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Computer and Information Science)

DATA-DRIVEN DISCOVERY OF CHARACTER ARCHETYPES IN TEXT AND FILM

As a step towards better comprehension of stories and their large-scale computational analysis and comparison, we present a computational framework for discovering character archetypes in folk tales. Earlier approaches, including our own, classify characters into a fixed taxonomy such as the 51 hero types from Seal and White's Folk Heroes and Heroines Around the World. A fixed taxonomy, however, cannot capture character types it does not already list, culture-specific roles, or differences between variants of the same story.

Our current work instead focuses on deriving archetypes from the stories themselves. A large language model (LLM) pipeline first extracts structured descriptions of each character's traits, actions, and narrative functions. The pipeline then groups these descriptions into recurring patterns and names and characterizes each emerging archetype. A single character can belong to several archetypes to different degrees. We apply the pipeline to a multimedia corpus of fairy tales and films to help us identify archetypes that carry across from old traditions into newer genres and media.

Our goal is to develop a tool for archetype discovery across media that can be used on corpora with no suitable taxonomy. It also offers a way to extend established classifications with the types they are missing.

Polona TRATNIK (Institute IRRIS & University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Computer and Information Science)

MAPPING FAIRY TALES WITH LLMS: TOWARDS A METHODOLOGY FOR SOCTALES

The presentation introduces a proposed methodological approach for the SocTales project, based on conceptual mapping of fairy-tale narratives at three interconnected levels: motifs, political concepts and values, and broader cultural narratives. Drawing on selected examples from Slovenian socialist children's literature, it explores how this approach, supported by large language models (LLMs) and semiotic analysis, could help examine fairy tales' ideological and cultural functions.

The presentation aims to initiate discussion on further developing and testing the methodology, selecting and scoping case studies, and the research's comparative dimension. Particular attention will be given to defining the involvement of international collaborators, including their potential contributions to comparative case studies, methodological development, and scholarly events. The discussion will inform the project's research priorities and the next steps in its implementation.