

# Observing is Constructing— How Does Measuring the Mind Change the Mind?

Workshop with Roundtable Discussion



Wednesday, 2.4.2025

14.00–18.15

Center for Cognitive Science,  
Vegova 4, 1000 Ljubljana

# EVENT PROGRAMME

**14.00–14.10**

**Short introduction to the field of demand characteristics  
(Urban Kordeš)**

**14.10–14.40**

**Is the refrigerator light on when the door is closed? Let me check  
(Urban Kordeš)**

**14.45–15.25**

**Suggestion effects: A misunderstood and under recognised  
confound (Madeline Stein)**

**15.30–16.10**

**How is a cognitive task like hypnotic suggestion? (Aleš Oblak)**

**16.10–16:45**

***Refreshment Break***

**16.45–18.15**

**Roundtable with Q&A: How to think about the influence of  
observation?**

**(Anja Podlesek, Grega Repouš, Urban Kordeš, Madeline Stein and  
Aleš Oblak)**

**14.00–14.10**

## **Short introduction to the field of demand characteristics**

**14.10–14.40**

## **Is the refrigerator light on when the door is closed? Let me check prof. dr. Urban Kordeš**

If certain aspects of research on the human mind can afford to ignore the so-called refrigerator-light fallacy (the fact that observing the mind changes the mind), this is not even conceivable when researching subjective experience. When I try to reflect on my experience, the very act of reflection is influencing the experience I am trying to observe. So, what can be done? How can we capture the "real" experience? The lecture will suggest that this "fallacy" is actually the most important characteristic of the research domain we are interested in (i.e. consciousness) and as such bears some precious gifts to those who are willing to acknowledge it.

Urban Kordeš is a professor of cognitive science at the University of Ljubljana. His research focuses on an in-depth exploration of consciousness and subjective experience. Within the Laboratory for Empirical Phenomenology, together with the research group 'Observatory,' he engages in systematic and critical reflection on experience, as well as in the development and refinement of methods for its empirical investigation.



Slido



5713392

**14.45–15.25**

**Suggestion effects: A misunderstood and under recognised confound**

**Madeline Stein, PhD student**

Verbal suggestions are communications for involuntary changes in awareness and behaviour, and are present in various social interactions, from clinical interventions and forensic interviews to participant experimenter interactions in experimental research. As such, suggestions represent a salient confound across contexts, but they are often misunderstood, not recognized and not properly controlled for. Moreover, members of the general public display marked variability in their responsiveness to verbal suggestions, and numerous lines of evidence point to trait-like stability of response patterns, a cognitive-perceptual trait known as suggestibility. This talk will explore how suggestions represent a critical, yet underappreciated, confound and demand characteristic in experimental and clinical studies.

Madeline Stein joined the Department of Psychology at King's College London in 2022 and is currently in the third year of her PhD. Her research focuses on suggestion effects and individual differences in responsiveness to suggestions (suggestibility). Her work explores these topics across various contexts, including placebo and nocebo responding, psychedelics, hypnosis and demand characteristics. She employs a range of methods, including self-report, EEG, pharmacological interventions and psychophysical tasks. Her research interests are: placebo, nocebo, psychedelics, suggestibility, hypnosis, functional Neurological Disorder.



Slido



7127371

**15.30–16.10**

## **How is a cognitive task like hypnotic suggestion?**

**Aleš Oblak, PhD student**

In recent years, much research has been done into phenomenological control: our capacity to (sometimes unwittingly) change the structure of our lived experience. Phenomenological control has been linked to demand characteristics, the particular social dynamic that arises between researchers and participants in the context of a psychological experiment, wherein the latter intuit the hypothesis of the study and alter their behavior in an attempt to confirm it. This dynamic has been particularly problematized in the context of sensory neuroscience. However, in the field of affective neuroscience, the object of inquiry is such that a certain degree of control over it is desirable. Data from three studies suggests that while phenomenological control is indeed related to demand characteristics, it is also related to self-control as a component of emotional intelligence and alterations in the neural signature of affective processing.

Aleš Oblak is a cognitive scientist, currently working as a lab manager at the University Psychiatric Clinic Ljubljana's Laboratory for Cognitive Neuroscience and Psychopathology. His work primarily focuses on different aspects of visual cognition, such as visual-spatial working memory and perceptual presence, and phenomenology of psychopathology (such as the disturbed sense of reality).



Slido



3784649



**16.45–18.15**

**Roundtable with Q&A: How to think about the influence of observation?**

**prof. dr. Anja Podlesek, prof. dr. Grega Repouš, prof. dr. Urban Kordeš; Madeline Stein and Aleš Oblak, PhD students**

The event will conclude with a roundtable discussion addressing the question: How to think about the influence of observation? In addition to the three previous lecturers, prof. dr. **Anja Podlesek** and prof. dr. **Grega Repouš**, from the Department of Psychology (University of Ljubljana), will join the roundtable to provide a psychological methodology perspective. The discussion will be moderated by **Amela Lišić**, a master's student of psychology. A significant portion of the roundtable will be dedicated to answering audience questions.

Anja Podlesek, a psychologist and methodologist, teaches psychological methodology at the Department of Psychology, University of Ljubljana. Her current research focuses on cognitive control, its measurement and training, and post-COVID cognitive dysfunction. She is the president of the Slovenian Psychologists' Association.



Grega Repouš, a psychologist and cognitive scientist, teaches cognitive psychology at the Department of Psychology, University of Ljubljana. His research explores how cognition functions in both normal and pathological conditions and how the brain creates our cognition.



*Got questions? Send them in advance*



1709370