INTERSECTION DIALOGUES

The European Union as a Perfect Commonwealth

A core debate series within the U-TOPIA project (2027–2028)
Pillar III: EU-topia

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INTERSECTION DIALOGUES | The Sites



Brussels, Rue Royale Intersection
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Pula, Small Roman Theatre & Kaštel Fortress
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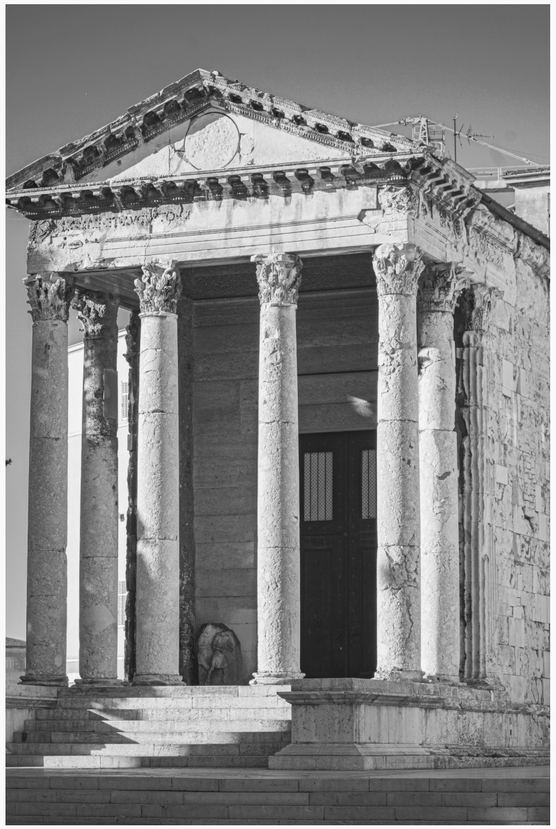

Pula, Temple of Augustus
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Brijuni, Veli Brijun Island
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 **Introduction**

- Framework, Foundation, Expansion

6 **Episode 1**

- Hume's 100 Cantons & the Digital Era

7 **Episode 2**

- Post-Sovereignty in the Algorithmic Age

8 **Episode 3**

- The Enclosed Commonwealth

9 **Episode 4**

- Can an Algorithm Embody Civic Virtue?

10 **Episode 5**

- Deliberative Reason in an Era of Deepfakes

11 **Episode 6**

- Multipolarity and the Global Commons

12 **Episode 7**

- Statecraft in the Adriatic

13 **Episode 8**

- Good Place, No Place, or Computational Commonwealth?

14 **Session Format**

- 90-minute, interactive

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The Framework

The U-TOPIA Framework (2027–2028)

The **Intersection Dialogues** form the deliberative backbone of U-TOPIA, a two-year interdisciplinary initiative investigating how political visions materialize within physical and institutional enclosures:

- **Symphonia**: Byzantine state philosophy and the golden age of Constantinople
- **YU-topia**: 20th-century Yugoslav socialist federalism
- **EU-topia**: Contemporary European governance from Brussels

Pillar III: EU-topia

Situated directly within the third pillar, *EU-topia*, this eight-episode series focuses on European governance, post-sovereignty, and the structural integrity of the European Union.

- **Venues**: Brussels, and key Adriatic borderlands (Trieste/Koper and Pula/Rovinj)
- **Core Focus**: The EU's architecture as a transnational political community – its legal legitimacy, territorial borders, and capacity to sustain common reason

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The Foundation

David Hume (1752)

“Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth” (Political Discourses)

- **Scale & Liberty**: Challenged classical dogma (from Plato to Montesquieu) that republican self-governance could flourish only in small city-states.
- **Distributed Republic**: Designed a large commonwealth of 100 self-governing cantons, where local councils elect representatives to select national senates and executives.
- **Institutional Engineering**: Relied on structural checks rather than utopian moral virtue to filter out demagoguery – ensuring "even bad men would govern well".

Sir Neil MacCormick (2006)

“The European Union and the Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth”

- **Beyond the Nation-State**: Argued that the EU should be judged neither as an aspiring Westphalian "superstate" nor as a mere customs alliance.
- **Living Commonwealth**: Framed the EU as a modern approximation of Hume’s distributed republic – characterized by plural authority, institutional checks, and subsidiarity.
- **Post-Sovereignty**: Replaced the illusion of absolute state sovereignty with an order where distinct legal regimes interact through mutual recognition and the rule of law.

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The Expansion

1. From Mechanical Checks to Algorithmic Governance

- Computational systems, predictive models, and AI increasingly execute administrative oversight and regulatory policy.
- **Core Question**: Does algorithmic governance fulfill Hume's vision of a neutral, self-regulating order, or replace human judgment and democratic accountability with opaque black boxes?

2. Subsidiarity in the Digital Enclosure

- Transnational cloud infrastructures, proprietary platforms, and data extractivism blur clear jurisdictions between municipal, national, and European levels.
- **Core Question**: Can civic technologies decentralize power back to citizens, or will platform monopolies and centralized surveillance enclose the commonwealth?

3. The Epistemic Common Ground

- Synthetic media, hyper-targeted cognitive manipulation, and generative AI fracture the coherent public sphere required for deliberative reason.
- **Core Question**: Can a democratic commonwealth deliberate if its citizens no longer share a common baseline of public truth?

4. The Physical and Digital Frontier

- Linking Brussels to the historic fault-lines of the Northern Adriatic grounds theory in automated border management, biometric enclosures (Eurosur, Schengen), and civil defence.
- **Core Question**: Who is included in the contemporary commonwealth, and who remains trapped outside its computational walls?

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EPISODE ONE

Hume's 100 Cantons & the Digital Era

- **Location & Time**: Brussels (In-Person) | 2027
- **Core Inquiry**: Hume posited that a stable commonwealth requires dividing large territories into local, self-governing units to check factional passions. Does contemporary Brussels achieve this balance through EU subsidiarity, or does digital and bureaucratic centralization flatten local autonomy?
- **Technological Dimension**: Algorithmic public administration, digital sovereignty, and the capacity of civic platforms to decentralize decision-making.



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EPISODE TWO

Post-Sovereignty in the Algorithmic Age

- **Location & Time**: Brussels (In-Person) | 2027
- **Core Inquiry**: Drawing directly on MacCormick's thesis of shared, non-absolute sovereignty. How does this post-sovereign framework withstand the rise of private, transnational digital monopolies that govern speech and infrastructure without a democratic mandate?
- **Technological Dimension**: Platform governance, private compute monopolies versus the public interest, and the extraterritorial reach of the EU AI Act.



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EPISODE THREE

The Enclosed Commonwealth

- **Location & Time**: Trieste / Koper (In-Person) | 2027 & 2028
- **Core Inquiry**: In the historic borderland between Italy and Slovenia, how does the European project reconcile internal borderlessness with heavily fortified external perimeters?
- **Technological Dimension**: Automated border management, biometric surveillance (Frontex), predictive policing algorithms, and the micro-enclosure of human mobility.



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EPISODE FOUR

Can an Algorithm Embody Civic Virtue?

- **Location & Time**: Brussels (In-Person) | 2027
- **Core Inquiry**: Does modern algorithmic compliance fulfill Hume's ambition for neutral, self-regulating governance, or does it replace human moral judgment with unaccountable systems?
- **Technological Dimension**: Automated welfare scoring, public sector risk-assessment algorithms, administrative transparency, and the limits of computational neutrality.



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EPISODE FIVE

Deliberative Reason in an Era of Deepfakes

- **Location & Time**: Brussels (In-Person) | 2028
- **Core Inquiry**: What happens to the democratic public sphere when generative AI, hyper-targeted feed algorithms, and synthetic media fracture its epistemic foundation?
- **Technological Dimension**: Generative AI in political campaigns, synthetic media detection, information warfare, and resilient digital public spaces.



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EPISODE SIX

Multipolarity and the Global Commons

- **Location & Time**: Brussels (In-Person) | 2028
- **Core Inquiry**: Connecting the non-aligned history of the Adriatic to the EU's global standing. Can the EU act as an open commonwealth in a fragmented world, or is it sliding into digital protectionism?
- **Technological Dimension**: Cloud colonialism, training data extraction, global AI standards, and open-source models as a transnational public good.



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EPISODE SEVEN

Statecraft in the Adriatic

- **Location & Time**: Pula / Rovinj (In-Person) | 2027 & 2028
- **Core Inquiry**: Exploring the spatial architecture of defensive statecraft—from Kaštel's fortress and Zerostrasse's subterranean shelters to Rovinj's enclosed Venetian core. How do physical and digital shelters define the boundaries of citizenship during geopolitical crises?
- **Technological Dimension**: Cyberwarfare, subterranean infrastructure monitoring, civil defence sensor grids, and the digital vulnerability of physical maritime nodes.



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EPISODE EIGHT

Good Place, No Place, or Computational Commonwealth?

- **Location & Time**: Brussels (In-Person) | 2028
- **Core Inquiry**: The culminating synthesis of the two-year inquiry. Have we created a functioning union of shared liberties, an enclosed bureaucratic fortress, or the blueprint for a democratic post-sovereignty?
- **Technological Dimension**: A roadmap for human-centric, democratically audited AI governance in the European project; presentation of the U-TOPIA white paper.



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SESSION FORMAT

A dynamic 90-minute deliberative architecture

- **The Thesis (10 min)**: Political and legal philosophy foundation.
- **The Antithesis (10 min)**: Technological and systemic critique.
- **The Disruption (10 min)**: A site-specific audiovisual or sound intervention by an invited artist.
- **The Assembly (30 min)**: Moderated debate between the two lead interlocutors, followed by direct deliberation with an audience of researchers, policymakers, and civic delegates.
- **Networking (30 min)**: Informal discussion and networking among participants and attendees.



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