



## Call for Papers

### THE AGENCY OF THE DEAD IN THE LIVES OF INDIVIDUALS: REASONS, TRIGGERS, AND CONTEXTS

International interdisciplinary conference

July 2 – 4, 2025

Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Aškerčeva 2, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Organised by

ERC project *The Roles of the Agency of the Dead in the Lives of Individuals in Contemporary Society*  
(DEAGENCY, ERC № 101095729)

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Contrary to pre-modern European societies, and many contemporary non-Western societies, where the dead were considered members of the community and continued to be significantly involved in people's everyday lives, the dominant Western ontology nowadays does not integrate communication and exchange between the living and the dead. However, as a bulk of quantitative as well as qualitative research testify, for people in many contemporary Western societies, social interactions do not necessarily cease after death but are merely transformed. The dead continue to be involved in our lives, affecting our thoughts, emotions, values, behaviour, and social relations. While scholars have often treated the accounts of the agency of the dead as expressions of “folk belief”, and ghosts as symbols and metaphors of larger cultural and social problems and changes, our aim is to take the effects of the agency of the dead in the lives of individuals seriously, as people themselves experience them.

The aim of this conference is to gain an insight into the situations in which the agency of the dead manifests itself and the presence of the dead is experienced. What are the reasons, the triggers and the contexts in which the dead affect the living? The violation of social norms of behaviour and cultural and religious values is generally seen in traditional cultures as a typical reason for the manifestation of the agency of the dead. Temporal contexts traditionally regarded as triggers for unwanted interaction





with the dead as ghosts, were usually critical, liminal periods in the daily, annual and life cycle. The same applies to the spatial context: boundary sites within the social construction of space, but also places associated with death (where people died or were buried), buildings with particular physical features and history, as well as places associated with mourning and the commemoration of the dead, were typical locations where the encounters with the dead were expected and where the agency of the dead was invoked. But do such “traditional” reasons and contexts still have meaning for people today? Or have new reasons and triggers emerged for the dead to affect the living? And how have new platforms for post-mortem communication - such as social media and the digital space - influenced the interactions between the living and the dead?

We invite folklorists, ethnologists and anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, thanatologists, but also scholars from other disciplines who deal with the dead in contemporary society to submit an abstract and participate in the conference. Papers may be based on a variety of sources – ethnographic, archival, digital, media, etc. The conference language is English; the expected length of papers is 20 minutes. There is no conference fee, but you will have to cover your own travel, accommodation and catering costs. Please use the following link to submit your application: [Application Form](#)

In case of questions, contact [Marja.Kovanda@ff.uni-lj.si](mailto:Marja.Kovanda@ff.uni-lj.si).

The deadline for submission of applications is **31 December 2024**. Acceptance of papers will be confirmed by 31 January 2025.

Mirjam Mencej, Prof.

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Programme Committee:

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