



Call for Papers

THE AGENCY OF THE DEAD IN THE LIVES OF INDIVIDUALS: EXPERIENCE AND CONCEPTUALISATION

International conference

August 30, 2024 - September 1, 2024

Organised by

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

Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana,
Slovenia

Contrary to pre-modern European 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 many people in contemporary Western society, social interactions do not necessarily cease after death, but may be merely transformed. The dead continue to be involved in our lives, affecting our thoughts, emotions, values, behaviour, and social relations. While various disciplines have treated the dead as expressions of "folk belief", 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.

This conference aims towards gaining insight into how individuals in contemporary society experience the dead and are affected by them. We encourage studies that focus on the following questions: In what ways do the dead affect people's thoughts, values, emotions and behaviour?





How are they involved in their social relations with others? What impact may the dead have on individuals in a wider social, cultural, and political context? How do people identify, conceptualise, and interpret the agency of the dead? What influences individuals' ideas about the dead and their possible agency? What sources do they draw upon in conceptualising the experience – is it tradition, dominant religion, alternative spirituality, popular culture, media, internet, political narratives, science ...? Do they develop their own ideas? How do people select and evaluate available sources? What particular discourses and values are linked to specific conceptualisations of the dead? How do contesting notions participate in the process of knowledge construction about the dead and the meaning-making of their agency? How are rival notions involved in power relations and struggles for social or political power? Have alternative views that have developed since the late 20th century already been adopted as “mainstream culture” within particular contexts, or do they (still) represent an alterity to the dominant ideas?

The conference will take place at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. We invite folklorists, ethnologists and anthropologists, sociologists, historians, psychologists, but also other scholars who study contemporary individuals' experiences of the dead to submit the abstract and participate in the conference. Papers can be based on various sources – ethnographic, archival, internet, etc. The language of the conference will be English; the expected length of talks is 20 minutes. There will be no registration fee, but travel costs and costs of accommodation and meals will have to be covered individually.

Please submit the application form (see below) with the abstract by email to Ms Marja Kovanda (Marja.Kovanda@ff.uni-lj.si) by **February 29, 2024**. The acceptance of the papers will be confirmed by March 31, 2024.

This conference is the first in a series of international conferences on the dead in contemporary society that the ERC project DEAGENCY is planning to organise annually, from 2024 to 2027. If you would like to be informed about the forthcoming conferences, please contact Ms Marja Kovanda (Marja.Kovanda@ff.uni-lj.si).





Should you have any further questions, feel free to contact us.

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Sincerely,

Mirjam Mencej, Prof.

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Principal investigator of the ERC project DEAGENCY (№ 101095729)

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