

FEAR OF THE OTHER

The theme for the ISFNR Folk Belief Network Sessions at the next ISFNR conference in 2020 in Zagreb (which deals with Emotions) will be “**Fear of the Other**”. This is naturally a highly relevant theme in our own times as populist politicians try to make use of the media and social media to whip up support for themselves by fuelling emotions against those who are classed as threatening “outsiders” or “others”. Such fears are regularly reflected in a range of narratives which commonly focus on “beliefs” rather than facts. The fear of the “other” is, of course, deep-rooted in all of our societies, and has long been so. And it does not only refer to people from other cultures but also people within our own societies that we class as being different. In addition, fear can also define our attitude towards supernatural others, animals, technology, foods, vaccinations and other medical practices, beings from other worlds, and more.

The aim of these sessions is to consider not only how these fears are expressed in folk narratives, but also the short and long-term effects that these narratives (past and present) have on the ways in which we think and how we treat other people and how they influence our understanding of social reality.

Papers might consider the following:

Fear of the supernatural

Fear of the dead

Fear of the dark

Fear of the unseen

Fear of specific creatures (animals, reptiles, birds)

Fear of particular spaces/ places

Fear of “outside” cultures

Fear of deviance

Fear of magic/ witchcraft

Fear of the other sex

Fear of other classes

Fear of technology