

OCTOBER 1-3, 2026

DEPARTMENT OF ETHNOLOGY AND  
CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY,  
FACULTY OF ARTS  
UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA

# CALL FOR PAPERS

## 15TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF YOUNG FOLKLORISTS



### **PLENARY SPEAKERS:**

assoc. prof. dr. Kaarina Koski, University of Turku

assoc. prof. dr. Tok Thompson, University of Southern California

assoc. prof. dr. Jaka Repič, University of Ljubljana

# TRANSCENDING BOUNDARIES *CONNECTING WORLDS*

Cartesian dualism, formulated in the seventeenth century and later embraced by Enlightenment thought, introduced into Western philosophy and ontology a radical distinction between reality and representation. This foundational dichotomy divided the world into paired opposites: the concrete and the abstract, the physical (external) and the mental, the material and the social, nature and culture, matter and spirit, body and mind, flesh and soul, emotion and reason. Meaning, once thought to reside in the world and in things, came to be considered the exclusive property of the human subject— and it was humans alone who were seen as bearers of interiority, consciousness, and intentionality.

With the Enlightenment's elevation of reason, rationality, logical argument, and experimental proof, knowledge became increasingly subjected to the authority of law, science, and technology. In the Western thought, vernacular, embodied, and affective ways of knowing—those grounded in lived experience, practice, or collective memory—were devalued, suppressed, or excluded from dominant rational-scientific discourse. And yet, European vernacular, as well as non-European traditions have continued to provide alternative ontologies in which the boundaries between matter and spirit, life and death, nature and culture, body and soul, remain fluid and permeable.

Since the 1990s, however, various strands of scholarship across the humanities and social sciences have sought to revalue and overcome these dichotomies. The turn to embodiment foregrounded lived experience and the corporeal grounding of meaning, revealing the body as a site where cultural categories are inscribed and contested. Subsequently, affect theory and the study of emotions emphasized the relational, pre-reflective dimensions of experience that exceed rational control. Posthumanist and new materialist perspectives have expanded the field of inquiry beyond the human, recognizing nonhuman agencies—animals, technologies, objects, and environments—as active participants in the world's unfolding. The ontological turn, rejecting representationalism and its “epistemic intermediaries” between subject and object, has shifted attention toward what entities do in the world, rather than what humans believe they do.

# TRANSCENDING BOUNDARIES *CONNECTING WORLDS*

The conference invites contributions that examine and move beyond entrenched divisions in thought, practice, experience, science, technology and culture. We particularly welcome papers that explore the relationalities between the living and the dead, the topic that has long been familiar to folklorists. A figure of a ghost, far from being a metaphor, a “matter of belief” or pathology, opens up space between subjects and objects, and challenges dichotomist divisions between the living and the postliving, between life and afterlife, between presence and absence, between past and present, oral and written, digital and nondigital space etc. Yet papers addressing any of the divisions in contemporary world, and reaching beyond them are equally encouraged.

We invite young scholars, especially PhD students and postdocs, but also MA students of folkloristics, ethnology and anthropology, to cross conceptual, disciplinary, and experiential boundaries, engaging creatively with the entanglements of mind and matter, body and spirit, life and death, material and representation, personal and social, and so on and so forth. Together, we hope to imagine new modes of knowing and being that affirm the interdependence and relationality between various forms of existence

Please submit an abstract of up to 250 words via the [Registration Form](#) by **28 February 2026**. Notifications of acceptance or rejection will be sent out by **March 20, 2026**.

There is no conference fee, but participants are expected to cover their travel and accommodation expenses. This is an in-person conference, a hybrid or virtual participation is not possible. Each speaker will be allotted 20 minutes to present, followed by 10 minutes of discussion. The working language of the conference is English.

The conference is organised by the ERC project DEAGENCY, the Center MORTALIS and the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. It will take place on 1-3 October 2026 at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Zavetiška 5, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

## Programme and organising committee:

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Ana Svetel

Dagmar Nared

Emese Ilyefalvi

Jana Rajh Plohl

Jaka Aljec

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