

## International conference: *Affective Regimes of Normality and Discomfort*

**Organizers:** Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research (NORMANEL project), Academy of Dramatic Art, University of Zagreb (WIGO project), and the Department of Languages and Literatures, Communication, Education and Society, University of Udine (DILL)

**Venue and date:** IEF, Šubićeva 42, Zagreb, 28–30 September 2026

**Conference languages:** Croatian and English

**Abstract submission deadline:** 30 March 2026

**Notification of acceptance:** 15 April 2026

Foucault's critique of normality as a historically produced category, shaped through institutions, medical and penal discourse, regimes of surveillance, and the dynamics of power and knowledge, calls for an anthropological and folkloristic revision "from below," from the perspective of everyday experiences, cultural practices, and the affective dispositions of individuals and communities. The conference *Affective Regimes of Normality and Discomfort* starts from the assumption that discomfort is no longer an exception but a normalized condition structuring the affective regime of contemporary societies. The aim is to illuminate how cognitive, narrative, and affective processes participate in shaping imaginaries of normality, as well as alternative, more just and resilient visions of shared life. Folkloristic and ethnological insights into self-regulatory cultural knowledge, everyday practices, and (ritualized) forms of (self-)healing help us understand how individuals and communities endure at—and beyond—the edge of existential security.

At the same time, the conference opens space for critical reflection on our own positionality, especially the discomforts connected to complicity in the normalization of apathetic and alienated communities, regressive political trends, anti-Enlightenment movements, insufficient pedagogies, the failure to confront histories of political violence, and the production of insecure and dependent subjectivities. The aim of the conference is not merely to diagnose crisis and the pitfalls of the "affective turn" in the humanities, but also to explore the productive potential of discomfort—discomfort as a refusal to accept the normalization of violence, social inequality, and the erosion of democratic and humanistic values. Contributions addressing scientific, activist, and artistic transformations of the negative emotional spectrum into modes of resistance and responsibility are particularly welcome, as are practices that draw from cultural knowledge possibilities for individual and collective empowerment.

Besides anthropologists, ethnologists, and folklorists, we invite scholars, artists, and practitioners from other humanities, social science, and arts fields, to approach the topic of the normality of discomfort from diverse disciplinary, historical, and methodological perspectives.

### **Thematic emphases of the conference:**

#### **Historical constructions of normality and their ruptures**

- normality as a historically and culturally produced category
- discontinuities of normality in times of crisis
- institutions, knowledge, and power in constructing normative orders
- discomfort surrounding research methods and the role of scholarly work on normality

### **Discomfort as the zero degree of the affective regime**

- discomfort as a normalized experience in the age of permacrisis
- discomfort as a signaling rift in social and cultural norms
- narrating normality, discomfort, and crisis
- autoethnography, confessional and affective narratives

### **The monstrous, the deviant, and the abnormal as boundaries of normality**

- the monstrous as a projection of social fears and moral panics
- bodies and subjectivities that elude the norm (disabled, hybrid, neurodivergent, “unproductive”)
- normality as a result of exclusion, dehumanization, and stigmatization
- intimate and *unheimlich* spaces: from ambivalence and aversion to monstrosity

### **Politics of normality: complicity, memory, and resistance**

- complicity in the normalization of violence and inequality
- discomfort as an ethical and political stance
- memory politics and confronting histories of political violence
- normalization of authoritarian and antihumanist discourses

### **Digital normalities and the affective economy of everyday life**

- social media as spaces for producing new norms, discomforts, and dysfunctions
- digital affective codes (emojis, memes, viral narratives)
- digital rituality and affective self-regulation online
- discomfort and uncertainty surrounding LLMs

### **The body as a relational site of encounter between norms, affects, and social expectations**

- discomfort as an experience at the intersection of intra- and interpsychic processes and normative regimes
- crip and neurodivergent perspectives: epistemological conditions
- perception, attention, and sensory experience as politically and culturally coded modalities
- silence, fragmentation, and affective standstills as forms of communication and defense within group and institutional dynamics
- ableism as the infrastructure of normality

### **The discomforts of gender constitution in capitalist affective regimes**

- discomforts related to medico-legal technologies shaping and naturalizing gender
- discomforts and (ab)normalities in the production of regulatory family structures
- discomforts related to the feminist subject and the agency of the gendered body
- discomforts related to the social reproduction in capitalism

Please send a short abstract (up to 200 words) and a brief CV (up to 100 words) by **30 March 2026** to the following email address: [nina@ief.hr](mailto:nina@ief.hr) (with the subject “NORMANEL conference submission”)