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CfP: Liminality and hybridity in death

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What does death mean for, and in, contemporary politics? Whereas death seemingly constitutes an abrupt end point beyond which all meaning disappears, scholars have pointed out that death can play a significant and ambiguous role in political life, by marking the in-between spaces overlooked in political analysis and practice.

This workshop zooms in on the possibilities opened by performances and representations of death to challenge the boundaries and reverse the exclusions of politics. In line with Mälksoo, this workshop considers liminality as “a vital moment of creativity” with the potential to bring to attention a range of political issues and to disrupt conventional hierarchies in International Relations.

On the one hand, performances of death give political agency to abject bodies who are excluded from national citizenship rights but struggle into political life and become citizens. This is why carnivalesque performances which involve the formation of hybrid identities often feature symbols and motifs of death and can rupture everyday routines and transgress the norms of civil society. Environmental protests, for example, feature the embodiment of endangered species, highlighting the exclusions of environmental policy, amplifying the resonance of the more-than-human.

On the other hand, the marked variance in the valorisation of dead bodies highlights the gaps in-between the borders of nation states, the liminal figures whose bodies do not matter and whose deaths are not counted. Here liminality can be seen as a space that calls for ethical thinking about the relationship between representation and humanisation, and most importantly, dehumanisation of migrants and refugees. From problematising unusual burials and unmarked graves to memorialisation practices that incite political and social reactions, dead bodies can have a currency that they weren't afforded in life.

This workshop invites papers that focus on, engage with, question, theorise or problematise the rituals, discourses, imaginaries and performances of death.

Potential topics include but are not limited to:

- The meaning of death for and in contemporary politics
- Liminality and death as “a vital moment of creativity” in political theory and action.
- Ethics and politics of grief and mourning
- Death and the carnivalesque
- The role of dead bodies and the construction of particular spaces as the appropriate sites for memory
- Human dignity in liminal spaces
- The role of funeral rites and burials in establishing liminality