

HUMANS AND COMMUNITIES I: ARCHAEOLOGY AND PREHISTORY

Date: 29–30 October 2026
Venue: Latvian National Museum of History,
Riga Castle (Riga, 3 Pils Square, Latvia)
Working language: English
Submission deadline: 15 June 2026

LATVIAN
NATIONAL
MUSEUM OF
HISTORY
1869



Latvian National Museum of History
(Latvijas Nacionālais vēstures muzejs)
University of Latvia — Interdisciplinary Research Incubator
“The Beginnings of Latvia” (“Latvijas sākotne”)

Call for papers

Conference Description

The first conference in the *Humans and Communities* series focuses on prehistoric societies and on questions of community formation, interaction, and transformation as approached from archaeological and related interdisciplinary perspectives.

The study of communities in prehistory is a complex undertaking, shaped by the particular character of available sources and requiring the integration of insights from multiple disciplines. An ongoing scholarly debate concerns the extent to which evidence from material culture illuminates prehistoric social relationships, identities, and forms of belonging and how other disciplines, including emerging ones, are contributing to obtaining a more consistent picture of interpretations of the social, military, and political structures of the Baltic Sea region prior to the Crusades. However, the material culture provides compelling evidence of possible social hierarchies, diverse cultural traditions, and extensive networks of exchange. Thus, it serves as a persistent catalyst, prompting scholars to return to the interpretation of social structures time and again.

The understanding of fundamental concepts such as kinship, ethnicity, migration, and intercultural contact has been substantially advanced by interdisciplinary research — drawing on linguistics and ethnology alongside the natural sciences, including archaeogenetics, isotopic analysis, and environmental archaeology. These methods and techniques open new avenues for approaching longstanding archaeological questions. The conference explicitly welcomes contributions that engage with this methodological breadth: from field archaeology and artefact analysis to computational approaches, historical linguistics, and biomolecular research. It is through such cross-disciplinary collaboration and methodological innovation that researchers continue to develop fresh perspectives on humans, communities, and prehistoric society in the Baltic Sea region.

The questions of community and social structure, moreover, carry significance that extends well beyond the academy. Interpretations of ethnicity, kinship, and early forms of political organisation continue to shape contemporary national and regional identities, making rigorous, reflexive, and historically informed scholarly engagement with these questions all the more important. The conference welcomes contributions that are attentive to this broader civic and cultural context.

To advance current research on prehistoric societies and to foster new interdisciplinary collaborations in the Baltic region, the conference invites contributions examining how prehistoric communities emerged, functioned, and interacted, with particular attention to the Baltic Sea region and the territory of present-day Latvia.

Conference Themes

The conference welcomes contributions addressing the following themes, among others:

- Archaeological evidence and the interpretation of cultural and social phenomena
- Ethnicity, power, and social hierarchies: interaction and coexistence
- Interdisciplinary approaches – natural sciences, linguistics, and cultural studies – in the study of kinship, migration, and intercultural contacts: possibilities, limitations, and new findings
- Early forms of political organisation and social structure: interpreting material culture alongside written sources
- Linguistic, archaeological, and genetic (aDNA) data in the study of ethnic and linguistic group history and migration
- Material culture as an expression of community identity
- Specialised and professional communities (e.g., traders, artisans, warrior retinues) and their representation in the archaeological record

Submission Guidelines

Proposals should include a title, an abstract of up to 250 words and institutional affiliation. Planned length of presentation: 20 minutes.

Abstract submissions: [click here](#)

Please submit using the online form by 15 June 2026.

Presenters will be notified of decisions by 1 July 2026. Selected contributions may be considered for publication in a conference proceedings volume, with further details to be announced in due course.

For further information about the conference series, please contact the organisers at olga.mihelovica@lnvm.gov.lv or liv@lu.lv