

# HUMANS AND COMMUNITIES

International Conference Series, 2026–2029

## About the Conference Series

The international conference series *Humans and Communities* (2026–2029) explores the role of communities as structures for shaping social, political, and economic life across different historical periods in Latvia and the Baltic Sea region. The series treats community not as a fixed category but as a dynamic process — encompassing the formation of bonds in pursuit of shared goals, the creation and maintenance of identity through signs, symbols, and rituals, and the ongoing negotiation of membership and belonging. These characteristics are recognisable across all historical periods and in communities of every scale and kind.

Bringing together scholars working across a broad spectrum of humanities and natural science disciplines — from archaeology, history, linguistics, ethnology, and intangible heritage studies to genome studies, biology, geography, and beyond — the series foregrounds interdisciplinary dialogue and methodological exchange as the foundation for a shared analytical perspective on communities as dynamic forms of human organisation that have contributed to the path of today’s society. Each of the four conferences is dedicated to a distinct chronological framework while maintaining a common analytical focus and shared thematic vocabulary, so that the series as a whole fosters dialogue not only across disciplines but across historical periods. Opening in 2026 with *Humans and Communities I: Archaeology and Prehistory*, the conference series continues in 2027 with *Humans and Communities II: The Medieval and Early Modern Periods* (13<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries), followed in 2028 by *Humans and Communities III: Modernisation and State Formation* (19<sup>th</sup> century–1939), and concluding in 2029 with *Humans and Communities IV: Occupation, Resilience, and Restored Independence* (1940–present). Together, the four conferences illuminate both continuity and change in the forms and functions of human communities from the earliest prehistory to the present day.

The series is inspired by the new core exhibition of the Latvian National Museum of History, *Streaming Time (Straumējot laiku)*, which presents the passage of Latvian history through the lens of human affiliation with communities. The exhibition foregrounds the diversity of communities that have existed in the territory of Latvia from the Palaeolithic to the present day, emphasising their roles in ensuring survival, securing prosperity, defending territories, and asserting rights and freedoms. By presenting questions of identity and social ties across historical periods, the exhibition provides both a conceptual framework and an institutional home for the conference series.

## Shared Thematic Areas

Across all four conferences, the series welcomes contributions engaging with the following thematic areas:

- Communities as agents of social, political, and economic development
- Contacts between communities and their material and cultural traces
- Coexistence, competition, and cooperation among communities
- Communities as structured entities: roles, hierarchies, power, and privilege
- Social ties within communities: mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, relationship-building, and the transmission of social bonds
- The formation of community identities and identity-building strategies
- Strategies for expressing belonging and identity: practices, representations, and material culture (including traditions, symbols, and their changing meanings)
- The social and the material: imprints of community identity in cultural heritage

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The Latvian National Museum of History (LNMH) is an innovative and dynamic heritage institution that collects, preserves and researches various themes of Latvian history and creates an exciting and content-rich experience for the visitors. The Museum's outstanding value is its varied archaeology, ethnography, numismatics, history and art history collections, developed since the 1870s. The Museum's collection covers 12,000 years of diverse evidence of material and spiritual culture.

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The University of Latvia Interdisciplinary Research Incubator "The Beginnings of Latvia" ("Latvijas sākotne") brings together the expertise of researchers and institutions across diverse fields, establishing a permanent cross-disciplinary collaboration platform for the study of Latvia's history from the earliest periods to the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

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