

CALL for PAPERS

EARLY CAREER SCHOLARS CONFERENCE

Mastering Smallness: Strategies and Practices of Small-Scale Actors

organized by

Herder-Institute for Historical Research on East Central Europe (Marburg, Germany),

the Lithuanian Institute of History (Vilnius, Lithuania)

and the Northeast Institute (Institute for the Culture and History of Germans in Northeast Europe - IKGn e.V., Lüneburg, Germany)

Venue: Lithuanian Institute of History (17 Tiltos Street, Vilnius, Lithuania), conference hall

Date: 20-21 October 2026

The aim of the workshop is to reflect on the concept of smallness from a historical perspective. Small states, communities and businesses have traditionally been framed as rule-takers rather than rule-makers in times of crisis, constraint or increasing globalization. However, as history has proven, smallness can be an asset rather than a weakness, offering room to maneuver that is unavailable to “big players.”

Small-scale actors have often developed and employed various strategies to resist the pressure of homogenization, hegemonization or monopolization, preserving distinct identities and proving their resilience by defending their national, local or regional interests and thus influencing broader developments.

Beyond political and economic dimensions, the workshop also seeks to explore innovative practices, artistic production, and participatory forms that shape and reflect experiences of smallness.

This conference welcomes papers from PhD students and early-career researchers (within 2 years of completing their PhD), offering junior researchers the opportunity to present their research and join the broader discussion.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- › Agricultural, economic, cultural and political strategies of smaller units within broader state structures;
- › Community responses to conflicts, crises or opportunities;
- › (Cultural) forms of protest, dissent, and resistance in small communities, including artistic activism, symbolic practices, and alternative public spheres;
- › Everyday practices and social cohesion under ideological constraints and in times of transformation;
- › Business history approaches to small and medium-sized companies on national or global markets;
- › The role of local cultural institutions (museums, theatres, archives, publishing houses) and NGOs in shaping cultural visibility;

- › Small artistic scenes, networks, and forms of cultural exchange beyond major cultural centers;
- › Heritage practices, memory cultures, and local traditions as expressions of cultural resilience.

By bringing together perspectives from history, cultural studies, art history, and related disciplines, the workshop aims to foster an interdisciplinary discussion on how “smallness” has shaped political, economic and cultural developments across different historical contexts.

Candidates are invited to send 300-word abstracts along with a CV by April 30: forum@herder-institut.de

Successful candidates will be asked to submit a 3,000-word paper in advance of the conference.

The organizers have a limited ability to cover accommodation costs and travel expenses. We can cover up to € 250 of travel expenses from outside Lithuania.



With funding from the



by decision of the
German Bundestag

