Subjectivities of Owning Land
Land Redistribution and the Nation State in the Baltics Across the 20th Century

23-24 November 2026
Lithuanian Institute of History, Vilnius

Project Workshop:
The Impact of Land Reform on Baltic Societies Past and Present. Lessons from History

This workshop should explore how land redistribution has functioned as a central arena for negotiating citizenship, morality, and national sovereignty in the Baltic states across a century of historical ruptures. From the post-WWI agrarian reforms aiming to dismantle 'foreign' estates, through the violent traumas of Soviet collectivisation, to the post-1991 drive for restorative justice, land policies have consistently shaped Baltic state-society relations. The workshop examines the profound clashes between central state directives and local bureaucratic practices, highlighting how rural populations actively articulate deeply rooted 'landowning subjectivities'. A focus of the workshop is on how understanding these historical dynamics can help navigating contemporary politics around market integration, economic transformation, and concerns around sovereignty.

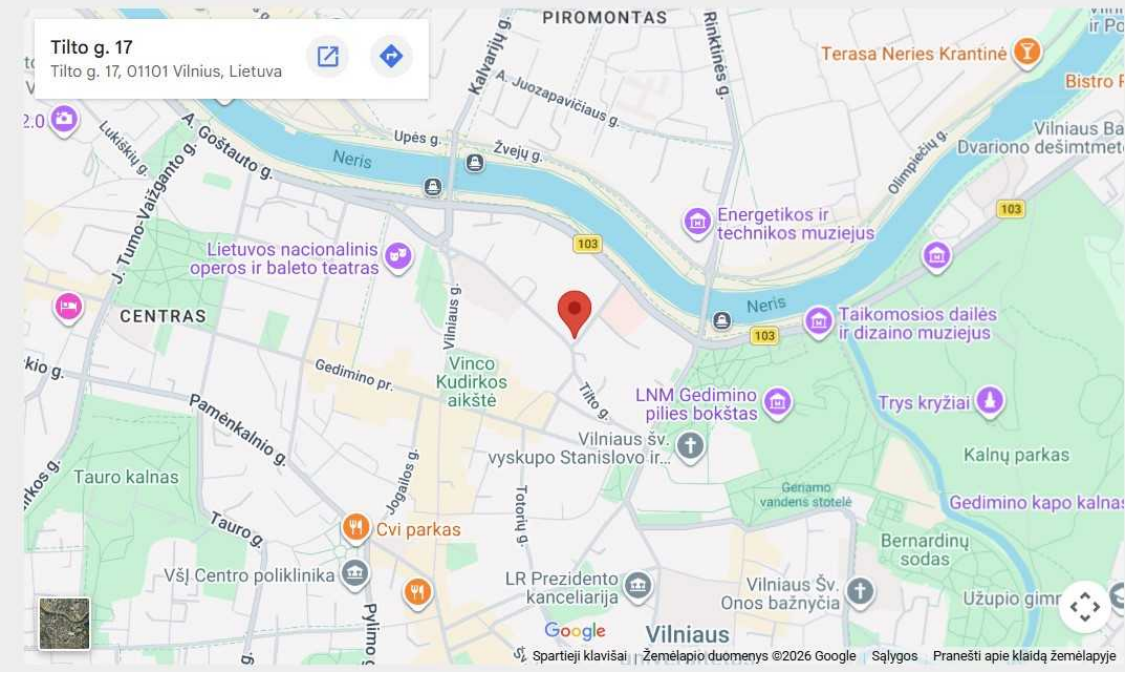
At this workshop, which is part of the AHRC-DFG-funded project 'Subjectivities of Owning Land: Land Redistribution and the Nation State in the Baltics', we want to examine what can be gained from a conversation between historians and practitioners, how land reform was enacted both at the centre and in the peripheries, and how local societies made sense of it. The focus is both on an exchange of research findings and on outlining fields in which historians and practitioners can fruitfully collaborate.

Participants

1. **Karolis Dambrauskas,** Land Restitution in the First Post-Socialist Decade: A Bottom-Up Perspective
2. **Rasa Čepaitienė,** Property Regimes Written into the Land: Remaking Lithuania's Rural Landscape from the 1922 Land Reform to the Present
3. **Inge Melchior,** Estonian Memory Guardians Taking Care of Their Family Farms, Land and Nation
4. **Kristina Jõekalda,** Land Reform of 1919 Shaping Baltic German and Estonian Cultural Heritage
5. **Marju Luts-Sootak, Triinu Rennu:** Before Land Reform: Comparing the Preconditions of 1919 and 1991 Land Reforms in Estonia
6. **Roberts Grinbergs,** The Largest Manors in the Baltics and the Fate of Their Heritage Today

7. **Saulius Grybkauskas,** Lithuanian Village at a Crossroads in the Late Soviet Era: Between Industrial Production and the Traditional Way of Life
8. **Evelin Jürgenson**,Reshaping Land Relations after 1991: Estonia's Land Reform and Its Long-Term Legacies
9. **Arturas Svarauskas,** Some Features of Land Nationalization, Confiscation, and Redistribution in Lithuania in 1940–1941
10. **Aistis Kitovas,** The Expanding Umbrella over the Lithuanian Farmer: Land Reform and Agricultural Cooperation in Lithuania in the 1920s
11. **Violeta Davoliūtė,** Dispossession Remembered: Deportation, Collectivisation, and the Discourse of Displacement in Lithuania
12. **Davis Pumpurins,** Who will get the land? Discussions on the criteria for land acquisition under the Agrarian Reform (1920–1937) of the Republic of Latvia.
13. **Paris Pin-Yu Chen,** Subjectivity and Dynamic Values of Land in Southeastern Estonia
14. Heidi Hein-Kircher
15. Klaus Richter
16. Tomas Balkelis

Venue: Lithuanian Institute of History, Tilto str. 17, Vilnius
https://share.google/zc1XONzGMmXu9UWXa



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Programme

Monday, 23.11.2027		
Time		**Location**
9:00 - 09:15	Arrival of the participants	Renginių salė, I floor, no. 116
09:15 - 09:45	**Introduction & Project presentation** Heidi Hein-Kircher, Klaus Richter	Renginių salė, I floor, no. 116
09:45 - 11:15	Panel 1: Land Loss and Land Acquisition **Chair:** Paris Pin-Yu Chen (University of Birmingham) **Davis Pumpurins** (Ruhr University Bochum), Who will get the land? Discussions on the criteria for land acquisition under the Agrarian Reform (1920–1937) of the Republic of Latvia. **Arturas Svarauskas** (Lithuanian Institute of History)**,** Some Features of Land Nationalization, Confiscation, and Redistribution in Lithuania in 1940–1941 **Karolis Dambrauskas** (University of Vilnius)**,** Land Restitution in the First Post-Socialist Decade: A Bottom-Up Perspective	Renginių salė, I floor, no. 116
11:15 - 11:30	**Coffee Break**	
11:30 - 12:30	Panel 2: Continuity and Junctures in Land Reform in Estonia **Chair:** Davis Pumpurins (Ruhr University Bochum) **Marju Luts-Sootak** (University of Tartu), **Triinu Rennu** (University of Tartu), Before Land Reform: Comparing the Preconditions of 1919 and 1991 Land Reforms in Estonia **Evelin Jürgenson** (Estonian University of Life Sciences), Reshaping Land Relations after 1991: Estonia's Land Reform and Its Long-Term Legacies	Renginių salė, I floor, no. 116
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch	
13:30 – 15:00	Group Work Session	no. 324.
15:30 – 18:00	City Tour	
19:00	Dinner at GABI Restaurant	Šv. Mykolo g. 6-2, LT-01124, Vilnius

Tuesday, 24.11.2026		
Time		**Location**
9:00 - 10:00	Panel 3: Cultural Heritage and Land **Chair:** Davis Pumpurins (Ruhr University Bochum) **Kristina Jõekalda** (Estonian Academy of Arts), Land Reform of 1919 Shaping Baltic German and Estonian Cultural Heritage **Roberts Grinbergs** (Latvian Castles and Manors Association), The Largest Manors in the Baltics and the Fate of Their Heritage Today	Renginių salė, I floor, no. 116
10:00 - 10:15	**Coffee Break**	
10:15 - 11:45	Panel 4: Memory, Subjectivity and Land Reform **Chair:** Tomas Balkelis (Lithuanian Institute of History) **Violeta Davoliūtė** (University of Vilnius)**,** Dispossession Remembered: Deportation, Collectivisation, and the Discourse of Displacement in Lithuania **Inge Melchior** (Maastricht University), Estonian Memory Guardians Taking Care of Their Family Farms, Land and Nation **Paris Pin-Yu Chen** (University of Birmingham), Estonian Diaspora's Experiences of Land Restitution	Renginių salė, I floor, no. 116
11:45 - 12:00	**Coffee break**	
12:00 - 13:30	Panel 5, Land Reform and Rural Life **Chair:** Paris Pin-Yu Chen (University of Birmingham) **Rasa Čepaitienė (**Lithuanian Institute of History)**,** Property Regimes Written into the Land: Remaking Lithuania's Rural Landscape from the 1922 Land Reform to the Present **Saulius Grybkauskas (**Lithuanian Institute of History)**,** Lithuanian Village at a Crossroads in the Late Soviet Era: Between Industrial Production and the Traditional Way of Life **Aistis Kitovas (**Lithuanian Institute of History)**,** The Expanding Umbrella over the Lithuanian Farmer: Land Reform and Agricultural Cooperation in Lithuania in the 1920s	Renginių salė, I floor, no. 116
13:30 - 14:00	**Closing session**	