

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS – 64th International Academic Week

Who Owns the Land? Property Relations, Land Use, Belonging, and Social Inequality in Rural Southeast Europe



Photo: Participants of the 63rd International Academic Week

Date: 5-9 October, 2026

Venue: Akademie für Politische Bildung in Tutzing, Germany

Conference Language: English

Conference Committee:

Dr. Judith Möllers, Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Transition
Economies/IAMO

Prof. Dr. Daniel Müller, Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Transition
Economies/IAMO

The International Academic Week is the Southeast Europe Association's (Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft – SOG) annual key event that brings together early-career researchers (MA / PhD/ Post-Doc levels) and experienced scholars from across Europe and beyond to present and discuss their research on the region. As always, it will take place in cooperation with the Akademie für Politische Bildung at the beautiful Lake Starnberg in Tutzing from 5-9 October 2026.

This year's conference is hosted by **Dr. Judith Möllers** and **Prof. Dr. Daniel Müller** (both IAMO).

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

Across Southeast Europe, land remains a central arena in which historical legacies, economic interests, social hierarchies, and cultural meanings converge. Property regimes in Southeast Europe have undergone repeated transformations, from post-imperial land reforms and socialist collectivisation to restitution and post-socialist restructuring. These layered histories continue to structure contemporary land ownership patterns, land markets, governance arrangements, and land use practices. The consequences are far-reaching: persistent inequality, fragmented or concentrated ownership, out-migration, contested identities, and uneven socio-ecological change.

This conference is a forum for research that assesses the current state of knowledge on land, property relations, and rural inequality in Southeast Europe. It brings together senior and junior scholars from across disciplines to examine how land ownership, access, and property relations interact with power structures, institutional frameworks, belonging, and everyday practices.

Target Audience

This call is directed at junior researchers working on the conference topic. We invite analytically grounded contributions from the social sciences and humanities that address land ownership, property relations, governance, identity, and socio-ecological change in Southeast Europe. Interdisciplinary openness is encouraged; disciplinary affiliation is less important than the clarity and relevance of the research contribution. The conference language is English.

Tentative List of Panel Themes

1. Land Ownership in Transition - Historical Legacies and Contemporary Structures

- Historical land reforms and their economic, social, and cultural legacies
- Changing notions of ownership and land-related cultural narratives
- Developments in land and lease markets, including informal arrangements
- History of ownership conflicts

2. Land Markets and Land Governance

- Challenges arising from legal uncertainty, unresolved property relations, and weak institutional structures
- Dynamics of land markets and access to land
- Challenges in cadastral systems and digitalisation
- Impacts of dysfunctional land markets on land use, productivity, sustainability, and the environment
- Land grabbing, absentee landownership, corruption, and local negotiation mechanisms

3. Consequences of Land Concentration and Fragmentation

- Socioeconomic and ecological consequences of ownership and land-use structures
- Impacts on employment, social inequality, and quality of life in rural areas
- Consequences of intensification, extensification, and land abandonment

4. Land, Identity, and Belonging

- Land and identity: everyday cultures, belonging, and the emotional meanings of land and landscape
- Gender roles and gendered land rights within patriarchal ownership structures
- Migration, remittances, and the tensions between absence, return, and ownership
- Perceptions of “emptiness” and “loss” within rural communities
- Literary, artistic, and cinematic representations of land loss and modernisation

Types of Contributions

We invite proposals for **paper presentations** or **poster presentations**. Participation without an active contribution is also possible, but applications with an active contribution will be prioritized.

Collaborative Scholarly and Science Communication Outputs

All participants, regardless of participation format, are expected to actively contribute to collective discussions and collaborative activities. The participants will be divided into different groups, either focusing on a) developing a collaborative, peer-reviewed publication, or on b) science communication outputs.

- **Interdisciplinary synthesis and collaborative manuscript development:** A central aim is to consolidate dispersed empirical findings and cross-disciplinary scholarship into one or more synthesis publications. Participants will identify key research gaps and establish author teams and timelines for the synthesis articles.
- **Science communication:** In collaboration with professional journalists, participants will distil key arguments and controversies into compelling social media formats, to bring research on land and inequality into broader societal debate.



Deadline for applications: 30 April 2026

You may apply for three different options of participation:

- Paper presentation (abstract and short CV required)
- Poster presentation (abstract and short CV required)
- Participation without own contribution (short CV and motivation letter required)

Applications with an active contribution will be prioritized.

The abstract should include your contribution's title and summarize the main topics and (research) questions you are going to address. Your CV should outline your academic status and offer information on the project your contribution is derived from (e.g. Master thesis, PhD, etc.). A motivation letter should be no longer than 300 words.

Conference language: English

Please register at our website and upload the necessary documents:

<https://www.sogde.org/de/formulare/hsw-cfa-2026/>

Please indicate which of the collaborative activities you would prefer to join. Accepted participants in the science communication group are required to attend a preparatory half-day online workshop.

For all applicants accepted for participation with a contribution, the Southeast Europe Association will cover travel expenses, boarding and lodging. We expect you to participate in the entire conference (5 – 9 October 2026) in Tutzing (close to Munich, see <https://www.apb-tutzing.de/english/>). The conference is designed as an entirely in-person event.

Travel expenses can usually be covered up to the amount of a 2nd class train ticket to/from Tutzing. In cases of lacking accessibility by train or bus we will check options for travel with alternative means, including flight connections.

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