

# Small Communities Facing Danger. Strategies of Solidarity and Resilience Before the Modernity

University of Coimbra, October 30-31, 2025

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## Rationale:

Through various theoretical approaches, including the application of prosopography, European historiography has been concerned with defining and researching different types of past

communities, the bonds they established internally, the relationships that linked them to specific institutions and territories and the ruptures and continuities from the past to the present. More recently, historians – together with other humanists, social scientists and cultural geographers – have focused on understanding the mechanisms behind the construction of these communities and their respective identities or connections, studying them either over the long term, or in clearly circumscribed settings. Similarly, scholars have sought to understand how these communities related to the surrounding religious, intellectual, and spiritual environment, often implementing differentiating practices. Examples of this include approaches to themes such as civic religion and the literacy of lay communities, among others.

How did many medieval communities survive until the end of the *Ancien Régime*? How did many of them reach the present day? What internal cohesion strategies did they implement? What self-protection mechanisms did they activate? What solutions did they manage to construct in times of crisis?

In this RESTORY meeting, we aim to address these questions through a survey focusing on small communities, their approaches to education and knowledge transmission, and their internal solidarity practices at different stages of life, including preparations for death. In addition, we seek to examine the strategies employed by small communities to confront climatic, economic, or conflict-related hardships across diverse geographical and chronological contexts. We also wish to reflect on human resilience in overcoming adversity, as well as human responses to pain, famine, death, and loss, in order to contribute to the historical characterisation of individual and collective trauma in the past.

For this scientific meeting, we invite the presentation of studies in **History, Archaeology, Art History, Heritage,** and **Manuscript Studies**. Additionally, we strongly encourage broader theoretical reflections inspired by the **Social Sciences**. As examples of lay and ecclesiastical communities that could be analysed, we highlight the following:

- cathedrals;
- monasteries;
- collegiate churches;

- parishes;
- confraternities;
- universities;
- professional and entrepreneurial corporations;
- local government structures.

Case studies based on these communities could focus on:

- Formal and informal mechanisms of education and knowledge transfer;
- Practices of economic and financial support to the most impoverished and unprotected members;
- Forms of solidarity and cooperation throughout life and in preparing for death;
- Consolidation of community memory and its textual transmission.

The proposed chronology, spanning from the Late Middle Ages to the end of the *Ancien Régime*, may be examined through sectorial studies or broader analyses adopting a long-duration perspective. The geographical focus favours the European continent and the spatial framework of Western Christendom, yet case studies from other regions and continents could be particularly valuable in fostering comparative reflections on a global scale.

The organisation of this workshop aims to ultimately produce a collective work to be published by a scientific publisher. Therefore, those proposing papers and those invited to participate must commit to the schedule presented at the end of this text. To formalise the application to participate in this meeting and editorial project, we request the submission of a **title** and **abstract (c. 500 words)** of the proposed paper, accompanied by a **detailed curriculum vitae** of the candidate, to the email address [restorycoimbra25@gmail.com](mailto:restorycoimbra25@gmail.com), by **May 31**. Registration for the event is free; however, the organisation does not cover travel and accommodation expenses. All participants will be provided with two lunches and two dinners, during the meeting. Once paper proposals are accepted, the organisation will send all participants practical details regarding travel and accommodation in Coimbra.

## Meeting Schedule

- May 31: proposals submission deadline.
- July 31: notification of acceptance of proposals.
- October 30-31: RESTORY Coimbra Meeting at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Coimbra.
- December 31: chapters submission to the collective scientific book.