



ELTE

**The Seventh Biennial Conference of the Medieval Central Europe Research Network
(MECERN)**

Spatial Worlds of Medieval Central Europe: Real, Imagined, and Conceptual

Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, 19-21 May 2027

Following successful conferences in Budapest (2014), Olomouc (2016), Zagreb (2018), Gdańsk (2021), Bratislava (2023), and Munich (2025), the Seventh Biennial Conference of MECERN (<http://mecern.eu/>) will focus on spatial worlds in medieval history, especially in Central Europe.

The concepts of space, place, and the environment are central to our understanding of medieval lived experience. This conference seeks to explore the spaces, places, and environments of medieval Central Europe not only as material settings but also as imagined and conceptual worlds. Focusing on a region shaped by the fluid boundaries of the Holy Roman Empire, the kingdoms of Poland and Hungary, Bohemia, the Balkans, and the Baltic frontier, it asks how medieval societies inhabited, understood, represented, and transformed the worlds around them. Recent scholarship has shown that space is inseparable from the ways historical processes unfold over time, while also drawing attention to the symbolic, narrative, and intellectual frameworks through which places and environments were perceived and given meaning. In this spirit, the conference invites medievalists of all disciplines – historians, archaeologists, art historians, literary scholars, social scientists, and scholars from related fields – to reflect on questions such as: How did medieval people experience and organize space? How were spaces, places, and environments constructed, imagined, and interpreted in medieval Central Europe? In what ways did physical, imagined, and conceptual worlds shape social, political, religious, and cultural life and practices? How did different communities define and negotiate the meaning of “place”? And how were space, landscape, and time represented in historical writing, hagiography, poetry, cartography, and other forms of expression?

We welcome papers on a range of topics, including the following:

Sacred Spaces: physical and conceptual spaces of sanctuaries, monasteries, parishes, cathedrals, as well as pilgrimage, processions, and the “sacralization” of the natural landscape

Medieval Temporalities: the lived experience and conceptual understanding of time, the organization of time, including calendars, ritual, memory, historical imagination, and expectations of the future

Linguistic Landscapes and Spaces of Literacy: multilingualism, the coexistence of languages and scripts in urban centers, frontier zones, courts, and pilgrimage sites; where, by whom, and for whom writing was produced, read, displayed, taught, preserved, and transmitted

Urban and Rural Environments: market squares, defensive walls, urban quarters, and the social stratification of city quarters, peri-urban spaces, hinterlands, rural landscapes

Politics of Space: administrative divisions of space, territorialization, political and military actions, and their spatial aspects

Frontiers and Borderlands: shifting frontiers within and of Central Europe

Environment and Climate: climate fluctuations, changes in river- and forestscapes, mining practices, diseases

Physical and Mental Maps: cartography, travel narratives, imagined and practiced space

Domestic Spaces: archaeology, art history, and the history of the medieval household and the gendered use of space

Internal Colonization: migration and settlement processes, settlement formation, the foundation and privileging of settlements and communities

Spaces of Power: spatial dimensions of authority reflected in narrative, legal, and administrative sources, and rituals of power (coronations, funerals, royal entries)

Space and Place in Literature: the literary construction of space, physical and imagined space in medieval literature, regional and local identities in literature, attachment to place in literary works

Sites of Remembrance: the literary, artistic, and historical memory of places, *lieux de mémoire*, cemeteries

We welcome proposals from scholars working across the full range of medieval studies, including political, social, cultural, economic, environmental, ecclesiastical, urban, legal, literary, intellectual, and art history, as well as historiography, the auxiliary sciences, archaeology, and historical anthropology. Both individual papers and organized panels of three or four speakers are welcome; papers should be designed for fifteen- or twenty-minute presentations. Depending on interest, the conference will also include a poster session, offering students and early career scholars an opportunity to present their research.

Deadline for submissions: 31 October 2026. Please submit a 250-word abstract and a one-page CV to mecern2027@gmail.com. Planned registration fee: EUR 100 with a reduced fee of EUR 50 for PhD students. There are no registration fees for scholars from Ukraine and those in difficult circumstances. The number of waivers depends on external funding. A small number of bursaries might be available to contribute to travel expenses. All applicants will be notified by 15 December 2026.

Organization:

Balázs Nagy (nagy.balazs@btk.elte.hu), and András Vadas (vadas.andras@btk.elte.hu)