



Spaces that Matter FWF Project

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Call for Papers:

“Spaces that Matter” at the International Medieval Congress in Leeds 2025

“Spaces that Matter: Enclosed and Secluded Places in Early and Middle Byzantine Hagiography” (P34478-G) is a four-year project funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) and housed at the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna. The project examines various aspects of spaces, with a focus on enclosed spaces, in hagiographical texts.

The project has a twofold aim: first, to examine how places of confinement and seclusion are depicted in saints’ Lives on a literary-narrative level; and second, to study how the holy protagonists, often male and female ascetics and monastics, experience their stay in such places and to what extent this experience affects both the development of the narrative and the protagonists’ character, especially their spiritual progress (<https://www.oeaw.ac.at/en/imafo/research/byzantine-research/language-text-and-script/language-use-and-literature/spaces-that-matter>).

In order to explore the project’s topic in a broader context with the aim to open new vistas for the study of space and sainthood in Byzantium and beyond, the Spaces that Matter project will organise a series of online sessions at the International Medieval Congress (IMC) 2025 at the University of Leeds, the largest scholarly gathering of its kind in Europe (7–10 July 2025, <https://www.imc.leeds.ac.uk/imc-2025/>).

Confirmed speaker: Prof. Béatrice Caseau (Sorbonne Université)

We invite scholars at all career stages to submit proposals for twenty-minute papers connected with the main topics of “Spaces that Matter” that locate them in a wider comparative framework; particular focus should be on the hagiography of the Byzantine periphery and the Christian Orient (i.e. Palestinian, Italo-Greek, Syriac, Georgian, Armenian, Coptic, Arabic, and Slavic hagiography), with or without a direct connection to the thematic strand of the 2025 IMC Leeds “Worlds of Learning”. We are particularly interested in research based on new material and novel interpretations on the theme of enclosed and secluded places in hagiographical texts and archaeological correlates. We expect that spaces, such as caves, graves, monastic cells, prisons, etc., in hagiographical narratives, visual culture, and archaeology will be examined in relation to the respective saintly protagonists.

Scholars selected to present in the online “Spaces that Matter” sessions will have the Full Virtual Only Registration Fees for the IMC (Standard rate or Student/Retired/Unwaged/Low-Waged rate) covered by our FWF project. If accepted participants choose to attend the IMC Leeds 2025 in person, we expect them to secure their own funding for travel and accommodation. However, the sessions “Spaces that Matter” will be exclusively held virtually.

Please send paper proposals (title and an abstract of max. 300 words) in English, accompanied by a short biography (300 words max.) including affiliation, career stage and research interests, and a link to your professional/personal website or academic profile, by 13 September 2024 to Dr. Christodoulos Papavarnavas, christodoulos.papavarnavas@oeaw.ac.at. Papers will be selected by 20 September 2024 and successful candidates must confirm their participation by 23 September 2024.