

**NÁJERA**  
**18<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS OF THE MIDDLE AGES**

**VIRTUAL NEIM 2021**

**THE SOCIAL USE OF SPACE IN THE LATE MEDIEVAL EUROPEAN TOWN**

**CALL FOR PAPERS**



Aranda de Duero Map. Archivo General de Simancas. Mapas, Planos y Dibujos, X-1

**25-26 November 2021**

<http://www.neim.unican.es>

**SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS**

Gobierno de La Rioja. Instituto de Estudios Riojanos.  
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*International Meetings of the Middle Ages in Najera* have been proposed as an international congress in the field of study and dissemination of Medieval History since 2003.

This NEIM 2021 edition will take place in an offsite virtual environment, due to COVID'19.

Social theory and historical research about the use of space in towns has shown that the production of space was a gradual process. Urban space is not simply a demarcated arena, bound perhaps by something substantial like a wall and shaped by a built environment, but it was also the result of an on-going process of production. The memory of a physical border, cultural traditions of citizens, and social practices taking place within the city shaped urban space. The key to understanding this ordering powerlies in the concept of relational space, which is fundamental to understanding cultural transfers. Space is not a rigid container, but rather the result of construction processes and thus relational. Relational space emerges through connections between various objects, people, concepts, rules and places, which is also a fundamental concept to understanding cultural transfers. Thus, it has physical and social or cultural components. Furthermore, it was born of customs and laws but also driven by the demands of the streets. Space was 'lived' and produced by the people living in towns.

In this conference we will focus on the social use of urban space in the late medieval period, an era in which (the spatial centre of) many of the present-day European towns was shaped. It wants to study how urban space was produced, constrained, and defined between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries with a comparative European perspective. In this period, citizens challenged the power of territorial and ecclesiastical lords, and therefore urban communities acquired authority within certain spatial boundaries. But also within city walls space was highly contested. Spaces there became highly differentiated, laden with specific, if multiple meanings that could both signal and confer identity, status, and authority. Political contest, social change, and cultural constructions not only took place 'in urban space', but also produced space and emerged from prior spatial productions or constructions. The performance of rituals, prestigious building activities, the public punishment of citizens, etc. were the symbolic and spatial expression of the urban community, both acquiring power from its location and at the same time conferring power on that space.

Much of this has been studied from a top-down perspective: ecclesiastical authorities, regional lords, or mighty urban families have defined urban space. Yet, recent research has shown that the bottom-up perspective is a valid one as well: ordinary citizens gave meaning to the places in which they lived, they created market space for economic activities, and they constructed houses or organized the cleaning and safety control of neighborhoods. This conference wants to combine both perspectives. Sometimes the interests of commoners collided with those of the authorities (for instance when military needs forced them to undertake important building activities), on other occasions social conflict arose about the use of space (for instance when citizens appropriated space during political or religious conflicts). As a result, this workshop is not so much about how the urban space looked like, but more about how it was shaped, used and lived by citizens, both the governors of towns as well as their inhabitants.

We want to study

- how spatial constructions are appropriated by people;
- how social and economic practices confer rights on the users of space;
- how people acquire power through the ritual use of space;
- how urban communities define and defend themselves with building activities;
- how urban elites and ordinary citizens governed and organized urban neighborhoods;
- how cultural manifestations change the meaning of space;
- how gendered the use of space could be;
- how existing spatial configurations determine the course of political contests, and vice versa.



## CALL FOR PAPERS

Historians, PhD researchers and Graduate students are encouraged to submit abstracts for research presentations or posters on topics related to

### *The social use of space in the late medieval European town*

Abstracts should be no more than 500 characters and should clearly state the purpose, thesis, sources, methodology, and principal findings of the paper to be presented. Successful proposals will be published in 2021. All abstracts and a short CV (250 words) should be submitted electronically to NEIM 2020 at: [neim@unican.es](mailto:neim@unican.es)

The **deadline** for submissions will be **September 30th, 2021**.

The scientific languages of the meetings are Spanish, English, French, Portuguese and Italian.

All presentations will be made through the virtual platform TEAMS.

The texts of the power points must be in English.

Each presentation may be a maximum of 20 minutes long

You will be informed on the acceptance of your presentation per mail no later than October 20<sup>th</sup> 2021

## REGISTRATION AND ATTENDANCE

This year's virtual meeting provides the utmost flexibility for members to connect in ways never before possible, explore ideas, and actively learn in a new online environment. We invite you to join us.

Participants should send: name, surname/s, address, e-mail to: [neim@unican.es](mailto:neim@unican.es)

The deadline for registration will be on **November 25th, 2021**.

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This international conference makes part of the research project: *"Politics, Institutions and Governance of Atlantic European townports in the Late Middle Ages: a transnational comparative analyses"*(HAR2017-83801-P)