

**The Eighteenth International Conference of the Taiwan Association of Classical, Medieval
and Renaissance Studies (TACMRS)**

1-2 November 2024

National Taiwan University

CALL FOR PAPERS

Community Dynamics: Urban Spaces, Rural Places, and the In-Between

Space multifariously reflects and shapes the human experience. Space is imbued with all kinds of events, memories, and stories. Human action unfolds within space, human perception defines it, and human behavior molds and is molded by it. Space is mutually constitutive of human culture. Communal gatherings, from ancient Jericho to Renaissance London, have transformed the natural environment and given rise to interconnected communities. The conscious use and transformation of spatial resources lie at the heart of the dynamic relationship between nature and humankind.

The division of space into categories such as cities, suburbs, and rural areas plays a pivotal role in the human experience. In the *Iliad*, the high walls of Troy guard the city, besieged by an army encamped on the seashore. Vergil composed his *Aeneid* as Augustus wrote his new regime onto the city of Rome through art and architecture. Medieval London was often compared to celestial Jerusalem, while Florence was the Athens of the Middle Ages. Suburbs, with their theaters, brothels, and inns, served as fertile ground for intriguing encounters in the 16th century and beyond. These examples illustrate the critical role of space emerging time and again as humans strive to make sense of and represent their existence.

Even in the most urbanized periods, most premodern people lived outside of cities. In the *Works and Days*, Hesiod praises the worthiness of agrarian toil. In the Bible, Esau, a man of the field, has a power struggle with Jacob, a man dwelling in tents. Chaucer's pilgrims hail from diverse corners of England, converging in a suburban tavern *en route* to a shrine at Canterbury. In

Arthurian legend, knights venture from castles and courts to seek adventures in enchanting forests. Still, the rural is often imagined from an urban perspective, such as when shepherds amidst idyllic landscapes embody the human connection to nature.

Societies in ancient, medieval, and early-modern epochs did not merely document space; they imagined it. The spatial play in the Utopian imagination manifests humans' desire for alternative models of society. Dante wove together geography and landscape in the *Divine Comedy* to align with his poetics of redemption. From Herodotus to Marco Polo to eighteenth-century travel literature, distant lands provided fertile grounds to imagine the other.

Space also transcends the physical. Space, per Henri Lefebvre, is a “social morphology” that is “intimately bound up with function and structure” (*Production of Space*, 94). Urban and communal spaces birthed intricate social relationships, some of which were codified, like the law codes of Ancient Greece, the *Rule of St Benedict* for monasteries, or the municipal charter books of medieval free cities, but many were not. Indeed, social interactions within the ecosystem of a community, as highlighted by Pierre Bourdieu, depend on the relative position of social actors within the spaces that they collectively fashion. Still, as the rise of ecocriticism has shown, the importance of space applies beyond our limited human experience.

Understanding space, therefore, necessitates an interdisciplinary approach. This conference warmly invites contributions from scholars working in art history, literature, philosophy, history, classical studies, musicology, religious studies, cultural studies, archaeology, social sciences, and beyond, from antiquity to the early modern era. We also welcome studies on the cultural dialogue between East and West. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- The archaeology of space
- Intersectionality of urban/suburban/ rural spaces
- Space and ecocriticism
- Boundaries and borders
- Space as an anchor for communities
- Gender and/in space

- Artistic exploration and exploitation of space
- Space and Utopia/Nowhere
- Space and migration
- Space and sound/music
- Thinking space and society

TACMRS warmly invites papers in English or Chinese, both within and beyond the traditional chronological, geographic, and disciplinary borders of Classical, Medieval, and Early Modern Studies. Proposals for individual papers and for panels of two to four speakers (with individual abstracts) are welcomed. To ensure the quality of the papers presented, presenters should submit drafts of full papers by the end of September 2024. Selected full papers will be peer-reviewed and published in a special issue of the journal *Ex-position*.

Please submit anonymized proposals in English (250 words) or Chinese (500 characters), with 3-6 keywords and a one-page CV, to tacmrs.ntu@gmail.com by **15 February 2024**. Both the abstract and CV should be in .docx format. The conference will take place in a hybrid format on **1-2 November 2024** at the **National Taiwan University** in Taipei, Taiwan. Please note that presenters should be members of TACMRS if they reside in Taiwan. For information about membership and the association, please visit the TACMRS website at <https://tacmrs.org.tw/>. For more information about the conference, please visit the 2024 TACMRS Conference website at <https://2024tacmrs.wordpress.com>.