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**Public lecture: Urban networks in medieval East Central Europe**

The longest-lasting legacy of the Middle Ages in Central Europe is its impact on urbanization: the cities and towns that were founded in that period still form the backbone of our urban network today. This lecture will discuss the variety of urban networks that developed and existed in East Central Europe (first and foremost the kingdoms of Bohemia, Hungary and Poland) in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. This was a period when cities and towns were founded in Europe in ever-growing numbers, a process that allowed this part of the continent to create structures comparable to Western Europe in many respects while retaining contacts with the South and the East.

I shall consider horizontal networks, consisting of elements of the same rank and function, as well as vertical connections within hierarchically structured systems of settlements of various ranks united by the same overlord or by ties of legal or economic nature. Examples of the first type are rulers’ seats and residences that defined the exercising of power and were bound by diplomatic visits of envoys and the rulers themselves. Seats of prelates: archbishoprics and bishoprics, formed a different sort of network, dominated by the papacy and its legates, but at the same time also serving as secular centers. Functional similarities, for instance in case of mining towns, created yet another sort of horizontal relationship in one region or across regions. Commercial contacts could result in both horizontal and vertical networks, the former mainly between centers of long-distance trade, the latter between nodes of regional and local retailing. Special attention will be given to those aspects, such as trade and legal transfer which transcended the boundaries between Latin and Orthodox Christianity.

The discussion will highlight the various means and modes of networking in medieval times, from physical (travel and transport) through political (exchange of news and intelligence) to symbolic (use of symbols and rituals). At the same time, it will point out features that have specifically developed or changed over time in East Central Europe or some parts of it, or which gained a different meaning in this region than elsewhere.