

International Conference of the Austrian Society for Medieval and Modern Archaeology 2026

Call for Papers

Archaeology of "Lost Places". Abandonment – Afteruse – Change from the Medieval Period to the Present

Dear Colleagues,
we warmly invite you to contribute to the international conference of the Austrian Society for Medieval and Modern Archaeology, which will take place from April 7–10, 2026, at Stadtschlaining (Burgenland, Austria)!

The conference will be held in cooperation with:

- Burgenland State Museum
- Institute for Jewish History in Austria
- University of Graz, Department of Classics
- University of Innsbruck, Department of Archaeologies
- University for Continuing Education Krems, Center for Museum Collections Management
- University of Salzburg, Institute for Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture (IMAREAL)
- University of Vienna, Department of Prehistoric and Historical Archaeology
- University of Vienna, Vienna Institute for Archaeological Science (VIAS)

Conference committee: Roland Filzwieser, Margit Fröhlich, Barbara Hausmair, Peter Hinterndorfer, Thomas Kühtreiber, Manfred Lehner, Paul Mitchell, Elisabeth Nowotny, Gabriele Scharrer-Liška, Claudia Theune

		
		
 	 Institut für Urgeschichte und Historische Archäologie	 Vienna Institute for Archaeological Science

Conference theme

"Lost place" is a term generally understood to refer to recently abandoned places or buildings left to decay, such as industrial ruins, decommissioned train stations, deserted villages, or disused hospitals and hotels. Such places exert a special fascination for many people. This interest ranges from "dark tourism" to short-term repurposing as an event venue or as a space of interaction for subcultures, such as the graffiti or rave scenes. In a broader sense, a "lost place" is also a place that is barely or no longer anchored in the collective memory, but which, through this forgottenness, can also lend itself to new uses and interpretations.

The interplay of abandonment, loss of significance, reinterpretation and repurposing can also be an impulse for archaeological research, because conceptually the term "lost place" is compatible with archaeological sites of all kinds, which were commonly subject to processes of abandonment, or at least to transformation in terms of function and significance. This is particularly true in periods and regions of the world thought to be characterised by continuous settlement processes, such as the European Middle Ages and the global modern era. The double meaning of "place" as a physically more or less clearly definable location ("archaeological site") as well as a hub of social action and communication in the sense of the relational understanding of social space makes it possible to view the phenomenon from two different perspectives: On the one hand, by focusing on processes of abandonment and repurposing with regard to their material traces and their interpretation, and on the other hand, by researching the loss or change of functionality and meaning in social terms. The conference theme will encompass multilayered phenomena and dynamics in the context of processes of abandonment as well as the renewed appropriation and transformation of space, whereby from an archaeological perspective materiality and spatial patterns will play a role in different ways.

The focus is on the following questions:

- For which types of archaeological sites from the European medieval and modern periods can the concept of "lost places" offer a research perspective (deserted villages, ruined castles, secularised churches, abandoned industrial sites or care and health facilities, etc.)?
- What causes and motives can be inferred for the abandonment of archaeological sites? Or was it an archaeological site established for short-term use? If so, why?
- How can the process of abandonment be described and interpreted? Did it take place slowly or rapidly? Was the site cleared in a organised way or not? Is there evidence of the secondary removal of objects or looting, and what does the archaeological evidence for this look like?
- Can similar processes in the respective micro- and macroregion be observed at other sites, or even similar developments at a supraregional level in a particular period of time?
- How were abandoned places subsequently treated? Case studies could examine phenomena such as resettlement, repurposing, destruction, or also changes in social meaning, banning, or active integration into social memory.
- What material traces does the social loss of a place leave behind? Is "lost place" an appropriate analytical category in archaeology to describe repurposing and/or shifts in meaning, compared to, for example, "transformation"?
- What social and cultural significance do "lost places" have today, how are they used or understood by different social groups and how are such places addressed in the protection of cultural assets and by the heritage service?

Submission of abstracts

This list of questions is open and may be expanded to include additional aspects. Spatially and temporally, contributions from the entire second millennium AD (High Middle Ages to the present) may be accepted; geographically, the focus is on Europe, although global historical contributions related to the "world region" Europe are also welcome. The length of a presentation is 20 minutes. Please submit your presentation proposal, including the name(s) of the speaker(s), working title, and an abstract of no more than 1,500 characters (including spaces), by **July 15, 2025**, to tagung@oegmn.or.at. The conference committee will decide on the final selection of presentations. You are also welcome to submit a proposal for a poster (DIN A1 format, short presentation with a maximum of five minutes speaking time). The conference languages are German and English.

Conference fee: € 110,- (not including lunch, or field trip on Friday).

Reduced conference fee for students and young researchers: € 60,- (not including lunch, or field trip on Friday). Applications for further support may be accepted subject to the availability of subsidies.

A publication of the conference papers is planned for Volume 43 of the *Beiträge zur Mittelalter- und Neuzeitarchäologie in Österreich* (publication date 2027), with the deadline for the submission of a manuscript 31 October 2026. Please adhere to the [Guidelines for Authors](#).

The organisers and the conference committee look forward to your attendance.

If you have questions, please contact us: tagung@oegmn.or.at

Privacy Policy: This privacy policy explains the nature, scope, and purpose of the collection and use of personal data within the framework of the International Conference of the Austrian Society for Medieval and Modern Archaeology. By submitting an abstract, you agree that the Austrian Society for Medieval and Modern Archaeology may store and process the personal data you provide (name, address, including email address, and telephone number) for the purposes of the International Conference of the Austrian Society for Medieval and Modern Archaeology (making contact, drawing up the conference programme).