



PilNet Workshop:

From Antistructure to Infrastructure

New Materialities in Pilgrimage Studies

Programme e-Booklet



PilNet Workshop:

*From Antistructure
to Infrastructure*

New Materialities in Pilgrimage Studies

Convenor:

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Location:

Richard Eden Suite, Clare Hall, Herschel Road, Cambridge, CB3 9AL

Workshop Abstract:

Pilgrimage is usually understood to be materialized through specific types of sacred objects — relics, shrines, scriptures, statues, temples, sacralized bodies (either living or dead). In what is planned to be an informal, intimate workshop, we encourage scholars of pilgrimage to broaden the scope of what might constitute the salient materialities of pilgrimage. A focus on infrastructure looks less at sacred objects that are put on display and more at background forms of mediation that enable flows of goods and people to and around pilgrimage complexes. The ‘peculiar ontology’ of infrastructures lies in the fact that ‘they are things and also the relation between things’ (Larkin 2013). Pathways, varieties of non-sacred building, transportation systems, guides, maps, social media, taxes, visas, administrative, medical and policing systems all embody the physical apparatuses that are necessary for pilgrimage to take place. Indeed, they may play a key rôle in determining the character of the experience. In some cases, such as the Vision 2030 agenda promulgated in Saudi Arabia, pilgrimage in the form of the Hajj and the Umrah actually contributes to the planned infrastructure of state renewal. A focus on infrastructure has the potential to ask new questions concerning scale, governance, economy, mobility, and materiality in relation to pilgrimage.

Note on Papers:

Presentations (apart from those in Panels Four and Eight) to be 15 minutes each; Chairs will act as very informal discussants, providing a few minutes of informal reflections on presentations before throwing the floor open for questions. We intend to provide PowerPoint presentations: please send these at least a day in advance if possible or bring them on a flash drive.

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**Panel
One:**

Humans & Other-Than-Humans

The Agency of Other-Than-Humans: How Trains, Planes, Candles, Statues and Towels Make Pilgrims

John Eade (Roehampton/Toronto U)

Academic research on contemporary pilgrimage since the 1980s has focused primarily on humans in terms of meanings, motivations and behaviour. Various 'turns' concerning mobility, materiality and ontology have encouraged us to explore the ways in which other-than-humans shape the pilgrimage experience rather than just being a back-drop to human endeavour. In this presentation I want to discuss the role that trains, planes, candles, statues, towels, medals and cameras play in creating pilgrimage and pilgrims, drawing on my experience of travelling to and from Lourdes between 1968 and 1992 and again between 2013 and 2018, as well as reflecting on the 2022 St Bernadette relic tour to Britain. Rather than seeing these other-than-humans as inert material objects, the 'relational turn' and research on material religion help us to appreciate their active agency as people light candles, grapple with wet towels, touch computer screens, display medals and take selfies beside Bernadette's relics.

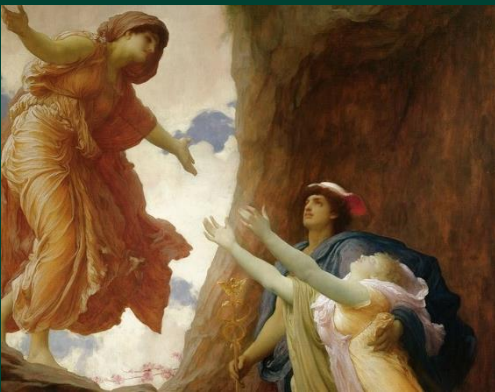
Cartographies of Pilgrimage: Digital Infrastructure, Mapping, and Heritage on the Katsuragi Ascetic Route

Tatsuma Padoan (University College, Cork)

Within the rapidly expanding field of STS, anthropological work on infrastructures has highlighted their world-shaping capacity of *making the social*, while at the same time being fully part of it. Although the importance of infrastructures in pilgrimage has been recently highlighted, producing innovative analyses in relation to the marketplace (Reader 2014), this specific understanding of the material environment—considered as a crucially active element of wider networks connecting human and nonhuman actors, rather than an inert background for human activities—has rarely been taken on board by studies on pilgrimage (Eade and Stadler 2022). This particular interpretation, stemming from a *material semiotic* approach (Latour 2005; Law 2009; Greimas 1990; Padoan 2021), found a fertile ground of investigation in the study of *diagrammatic relations* especially materialized in infrastructures (Jensen and Rodje 2010; Harvey, Jensen and Morita 2017). In this paper, I will explore an example of how such diagrammatic relations are played out in pilgrimage, by analyzing the recent heritagization of a Japanese ascetic route in Katsuragi, in central Japan, now part of the new governmental programme called *Japan Heritage* (2015). This pilgrimage—part of the Shugen mountain ascetic tradition and connected to the second post-war revival of the twenty-eight sutra mound route in Katsuragi (*Katsuragi nijūhasshuku no kyōzuka*)—has recently incorporated use of digital mapping through mountaineering mobile apps. By using this form of digital infrastructure, hikers and tourists alike are starting to walk the religious routes, previously undertaken as a whole only by ascetic pilgrims, and are producing feeds and blogs through these apps, which in turn are used by prefectural administrations to promote the heritagization, and by digital entrepreneurs to sell their merchandise. Through my ethnographic research in Katsuragi—making the pilgrimage with ascetics and other visitors, and conducting interviews with pilgrim groups, prefectural administrations, museums, and volunteering organizations—I will show how the diagrammatic

Persephone's Dilemma: Hidden Infrastructures and Territoriality in Womb Tomb Shrines

Nurit Stadler (Hebrew U, Jerusalem) & **Shlomit Flint** (Bar-Ilan U)



Infrastructures are the systems that enable the circulation of goods, knowledge, meaning, people, materials, and power (Geertz 1966). In pilgrimage studies, they can be associated especially with the analysis of the structures and architecture of sacred places and the ways these structures affect rituals, conduct, and interactions (Anderson 2007). In our analysis of sacred places in Holy Land landscapes, we have identified a unique architecture that carries hidden infrastructures. Following this discovery, we ask: How do hidden infrastructures affect the manner in which people experience sacred places and their rituals? Focusing on and extricating hidden infrastructure also creates a conceptual space to examine the shifting boundaries between material and immaterial structures and the shifting networks between assemblages of human and non-human actors. To develop an understanding of these questions, we use a combination of methods from archaeology and anthropology. Following these methods, we wish to shed light on more specific questions: What are the hidden infrastructures of sacred places? How are these infrastructures currently designed and experienced by male and female devotees? To tackle the visibility and hiddenness of infrastructures in these sacred places, we locate, map, extricate, and identify a set of Holy Land shrines, which we call womb-tomb structures. These infrastructures, although built in different periods (ranging from the first or second Temple periods to the Byzantine), are, as we reveal, a distinctive repetitive phenotype currently reused by Jews, Christians, and Muslim devotees. These buildings are structured around the tomb of a venerated figure, sometimes more than one tomb or chamber, they have

**Panel
Two:**

**Creating
& Re-creating
Pilgrimages**

Pilgrimage Materialities: The St Olav Ways as Administrative and Physical Infrastructures

Hannah Kristine Lunde (U of Oslo)

Contemporary pilgrimage in Norway is to a large extent being practiced as long-distance hikes directed towards historical shrines. Journeys are accommodated through refurbished pilgrimage routes made recognisable by branded way-markers and other physical pilgrimage infrastructures, maps, and guidebooks. In the last decade, twelve administrative pilgrimage centres have opened as part of the network of the St Olav Ways (leading to Nidaros Cathedral), governed by a national pilgrimage centre in Trondheim. In the same period, there has been an increased focus in the development of maritime pilgrimage routes, accommodating journeys in boat and along coastal hiking trails. This presentation analyses the development of the St Olav Ways as a pilgrimage network consisting of a complex blend of physical and administrative infrastructures. I explore how agents ranging from volunteers in pilgrimage confraternities to “pilgrimage bureaucrats” employed in governmentally funded pilgrimage ventures have contributed to the development of this network since the 1990s, and how they interpret pilgrimage as practice and placemaking from different viewpoints.

This paper offers new perspectives on pilgrimage materialities by detailing how hiking and sailing routes are developed as administrative projects realised as visible and visitable (Dicks 2003) pilgrimage landscapes and seascapes. I consider how pilgrimage infrastructures are developed concomitantly through both strategical and tactical perspectives (de Certeau 1984; Scott 1998). The strategical perspective on the one hand articulates how pilgrimage routes are visualised as coherent lines when viewed “from above” on maps, as well as to how visions and plans are formulated in administrative documents. On the other hand, the tactical perspective refers to how pilgrimage landscapes are outlined on the ground level through “probe journeys”, or experienced while being in “pilgrimage mode”; that is, through diverse interpretations of pilgrimage as placemaking and as embodied journeys. I aim to demonstrate how attention towards these different perspectives, applied by

Walking the Deer Line: Ontologies of Dwelling, Strata and Events in Local Pilgrimage

Gabriele Shenar (U of Sussex/Hebrew U, Jerusalem)

Focusing on the Deer Line Walk, a series of walks seeking out the remains of the *Cursus Cerve*, an ancient boundary line across the Island of Thanet caused in legend by a saint's pet deer, this paper explores the material dimension of pilgrimage as emerging through relations between artists, guides, pilgrims, ancient boundary lines, maps, street signs, boundary markers, landmarks, landscape, architecture, art, as well as myths, stories and narratives of shared historical knowledge.

During the walks, which are organized by a Kent-based artist and mainly joined by local participants, pilgrims endeavour to 'see' and experience an already familiar landscape, both urban and non-urban, in a different light. By way of tracing the often 'non-existent' and invisible Deer Line, they seek to uncover accumulated layers of the landscape in order to experience and narrate them as an affecting force. In so doing, walkers following the Deer Line, engage in a kind of 'virtual archaeology' that enables them to connect with the local landscape at a deeper level though at differing degrees of intensity. Significantly, these walks form part of a wider culturally embraced narrative of a layered landscape that has the potential of being experienced as an enchanted milieu of both human as well as other than human things. Furthermore, participants in these walks seem to be collectively engaging in and performing an aesthetics of enchantment by way of uncovering or making visible what is hidden or simply out there.

Virtual Pilgrimages and Digital Sacred Spaces

Heather A. Warfield (Antioch U/U Lille) & **Michael A. Di Giovine** (West Chester U of Pennsylvania)

The COVID-19 pandemic provided the backdrop for a burgeoning of virtual pilgrimages as well as for spiritual engagement in digital spaces. The infrastructure needed to support both phenomena may exist in conjunction with in-person sites or as an extension of physical realities. This paper explores both phenomena using the case of a virtual pilgrimage under development by the authors and the cases of viral social media posts that have become digital sacred spaces. We will explore such questions as what makes someone a virtual pilgrim, what characteristics are evident in virtual pilgrimages, what is the role of the platform host in shaping the pilgrimage, what is the role of the host in engaging with the pilgrim and/or visitor, and how visitor participation creates a virtual community. We will also present the results of a recent research study in which respondents were surveyed about their experiences and observations of virtual pilgrimage sites.

**Panel
Three:**

**Infrastructures,
Absences, and
Affordances**

Affordances of Absence: Pilgrimage Infrastructure in Bury St Edmunds, England

Ferdinand de Jong (U of East Anglia)

King Edmund of East Anglia was martyred by the invading Vikings in 869 AD. His body was translated to Bury St Edmunds where King Knut established a Benedictine abbey to care for his remains. The Abbey of St Edmund turned into an important pilgrimage destination, until King Henry VIII closed the abbey in the Dissolution of the Monasteries and Edmund's relics were lost. However, in 2012 a rumour that his remains might be buried under some derelict tennis courts in the abbey ruins led to the foundation of a Heritage Partnership that aims to improve the conservation and interpretation of the ruined abbey. As part of their long-term strategy, the Heritage Partnership hopes to regenerate pilgrimage to Bury St Edmunds. In 2022, a Pilgrimage Day was organized, inviting pilgrims, clergy, and promoters of tourism to discuss the possibilities of infrastructural renewal.

At around the same time it became clear that the congregations of different churches in the abbey's precinct entertain different views on the 1539 destruction of the abbey and the significance of its ruined crypt—which the Cathedral has reclaimed as a space to commemorate Edmund. This paper reflects on the collaboration between the various congregations to create an infrastructure for pilgrimage. If, as the CFP states, the 'peculiar ontology' of infrastructures lies in the fact that 'they are things and also the relation between things' (Larkin 2013), then the peculiarity of this pilgrimage infrastructure is that it is organized around an *absence* of the very thing (the relics). This paper examines the affordances of absence in rendering infrastructural presence and how, surprisingly, the legacy of the Reformation is reconciled and repaired by planning an infrastructural future.

Boats and their Pilgrims: The Infrastructure of Maritime Pilgrimages

Mario Katić (U of Zadar)

By maritime pilgrimages I mean practices that include boat travel for persons or icons as part of the actual ritual structure. Translocation of the sacred object and/or people also includes processing towards or over the sea to a location that has historical and/or folkloric connections with the object or the pilgrimage place (Katić and McDonald 2020: 3). Here I want to focus on practices connected to Madonna of the Reef in Montenegro. It is very rarely, within pilgrimage contexts, that we can encounter a group of people performing what we can frame as a religious ritualistic practice connected to a sacred site and sacred object but without visiting the sacred place or the object itself, as I found in Perast in Montenegro in the *custom of Fašinada*. *Fašinada*, as the locals call it, refers to the transporting of stones by boat from the coast to the small island of the Madonna of the Reef in order to commemorate both the finding of a miraculous painting of the Madonna on a reef in the sea and the construction of the island through the piling of stones on that reef. Because of decades of dynamic and substantial changes in political, religious, economic, identity, etc. context the contemporary participants of *Fašinada* are more interested in the experience of boat procession rather than visiting the island of the Madonna of the Reef. By using the maritime pilgrimage to the Madonna of the Reef as a case study I want to discuss the outcomes of the processes during which the boats and experiencing the boat procession as a part of the pilgrimage become more important than the sacred object itself and pilgrimage site. Additionally, I want to discuss what we can learn about the importance of maritime pilgrimage infrastructure and its role within pilgrimage.¹

¹ This work has been supported in part by Croatian Science Foundation under the project Adriatic Maritime Pilgrimages in Local, National and Transnational Context (8226).

The Inter-structural (Re)Production of Purity in the Golden Temple Sarovar

Raminder Kaur (U of Sussex)

The Golden Temple (also known as the Harmandir or Darbar Sahib) is renowned for its sacred water tank, the *sarovar*. Built on the basis of a natural pool in the fifteenth century, the *sarovar* plays an integral role aesthetically as a part of the architectural plan of the holy complex as much as it does for its spiritual or healing associations. About 100,000 people a day come to this shrine in Amritsar in north India to do *darshan* (worship or glimpse divinity), take *langar* (communal dining) and/or have a 'holy dip' otherwise known as *ishnaan*. This paper considers the material (re)production of purity in terms of how the water is kept clean with daily debris-gathering, periodic desilting programmes, along with an infrastructure of pipelines from the River Beas to the filtration systems installed in and around the *sarovar*. Even though the water is continuously changed, the belief remains that the water is the very water with legendary healing powers that Sikh gurus from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries themselves blessed. Conceptual or spiritual purity of the water has its own affective ontology, yet it is reliant on material purity that is (re)produced through a network of infrastructural and manual management imagined as operating in a different realm.

In addition, while caste, class and creed might dissolve in egalitarian Sikh ideals, gender divisions remain that affect the experience of the *sarovar*. For men, it is open immersion with *darshan*—they see the central shrine and the *sangat* (community) sees them as well in the water. For women it is contained or circumscribed immersion in two enclosed quarters on the sides of the *sarovar*. With the (re)production of purity therefore is the persistence of 'purdah'. The infrastructural has intersectional components (see Crenshaw 1989, McClintock 1995, Brah 1996, Anthias 2008) where the affective experience of the infrastructure for immersion varies according to positionality—in this case that of gender. Not only is it circumscribed for women

**Panel
Four:**

Pilgrimage in Practice

Developing Walking Pilgrimage in the Catholic Dioceses of England & Wales

Phil McCarthy (Hearts in Search of God Project Lead)

The Work of the British Pilgrimage Trust

Guy Hayward (British Pilgrimage Trust) & **Dawn Champion** (British Pilgrimage Trust)

**Panel
Five:**

Ambiguous Articulations

Governance and Infrastructural Preconditions of Pilgrimage on Mallorca

Maja Balle (Roskilde U)

On Mallorca thousands of people gather in the first weekend of August to make a nocturnal pilgrimage from Palma Town to a shrine on Lluc Mountain. This study consults data from previous fieldwork (Balle 2022) and explores the "soft" infrastructure (e.g., financing, communication) and "hard" infrastructure (railways, roads, signing, recreational facilities) as well as the governance (emergency and military services) that frame the event, orchestrated by actors from the local community, the church, private and public stakeholders. Through a myriad of effects, the infrastructure underpins the multiple ways in which movements of goods, equipment and people are enacted to, and especially away from, the pilgrimage shrine. The analysis of infrastructure as a concept contributes to understanding the prerequisites of the pilgrimage and the inherent contradictions that are played out in its life, and furthermore qualifies systematic studies of Coleman's (2022) notions on pilgrimage as a "human activity" in a wider sense. It provides reflections about the at first glance seeming "oddities" I have found embedded in the different levels and categories of infrastructure of the pilgrimage, where meetings between apparent contraries are made possible by the materialities of the event, e.g., in the omnipresence of Coca Cola advertisements within the spiritual realm of a Monastery, or the articulations between a nocturnal hike in pristine nature and the use of polluting diesel vans to transport the pilgrims away, or the songs of birds on the natural trails set against the music from loudspeakers.

Keywords

Mallorca, pilgrimage-infrastructure, public-private transportation partnerships, material networks

Materialities that Hurt: The Unwanted Infrastructural ‘Development’ of Pilgrimage

Evgenia Mesaritou (U of Cyprus)

Before Cyprus’s de facto partition in 1974, the Monastery of Apostolos Andreas, a pilgrimage site on the Karpasia Peninsula, was on the course of an infrastructural ‘development’ that had begun almost immediately after the completion of ‘the new church’ in 1867; most notable among them, the construction of a building to house a kitchen and dining hall after 1938, of guesthouses in the 1940s-60s and the paving of the monastery’s square with asphalt. Such works basically stopped after the site was rendered inaccessible to its primary user community, the Greek Cypriots. Not only were occasional news stories on the creation of nearby tourist establishments (expansions on the restaurant, new rooms being added etc.)² by the Turkish Cypriot authorities reported with concern, but even the infrastructural support for the monastery, worries about the ruination of which were often being raised before its restoration, was seen at points as problematic. Indicative is the statement of former Archbishop Chrysostomos that ‘he “would rather see the monastery collapse rather than [having the Muslim Religious Foundation] Evkaf undertaking [...] [the] coordination” [...]’ of the works (The Cyprus Weekly, 05/11/10).³ Apart from these types of ‘unwanted’ infrastructural interventions, another form of infrastructure emerges as problematic in Greek Cypriot pilgrimages to Apostolos Andreas: checkpoints through which one needs to go in order to cross to the occupied area where the pilgrimage site is located, road signs in Turkish, universities and new buildings one sees along the route, although not directly related to the pilgrimage, frame the pilgrimage and form the often painful ways in which it is experienced. Looking at the Greek Cypriot reactions to such infrastructures and interventions, I

² ΠΟΛΙΤΗΣ, 20/01/2000 σελ. 4. “Νίκος Φαλάς: Μετατρέπουν σε ξενοδοχείο τη Μονή», FIL, March 5, 2000. “Τουριστικές Εγκαταστάσεις στον Απόστολο Ανδρέα”. FIL 26/09/03 «Ε/Κ διανυκτερεύουν σε κλίνες παρά τον Απόστολο Ανδρέα», FIL 28/10/03 “Έφαγαν τον σταυρό του Αποστόλου Ανδρέα”,
³ https://media.philenews.com/Flash/cyprusweekly/flash/current-issues/weekly/05_11_2010/weekly/9.html

Panel
Six:

Scaling Processions

‘It Makes the Hell Shaking’: Ritual Marching, Pious Labour and Spiritual Infrastructure in Russian Orthodox Christianity

Jeanne (Zhanna) Kormina (*Groupe Sociétés, Religions, Laïcités, CNRS-EPHE-PSL, Paris / Higher School of Economics, St. Peterburg*)

A religious infrastructure, from the point of view of an Orthodox Christian, consists of two parts—tangible and intangible. When Orthodox Christians build churches and chapels, erect memorial crosses and statues of saints or make other markers of their presence in the landscape, they simultaneously create vertical infrastructure which connects these material manifestations of their faith with heavens. Whereas a tangible part of a religious infrastructure includes material things and buildings which make religious life possible, an intangible part is created by invisible agents who govern people and material things, as well as relations between them. The invisible world is no less real for a believer than a visible part of the infrastructure, therefore in her religious life a believer seeks for such moments when she can experience the integrity of this material and spiritual ecosystem. A typical example of such projects are processions of the cross, which have become highly popular religious events in Russia since 2000s. For secular observers these processions of ‘pious marching’ look like claiming the space by the Church whereas *krestokhodtsy* (participants in the processions) think of their ‘ritual walking’ as of their contribution to the future prosperity of their country which is becoming closer to its heavenly prototype.

The paper analyzes the Tsar’s processions of the cross in Yekaterinburg, one of ten biggest cities in the Russian Federation, which commemorate the massacre of Nicholas II and his family (1918), canonized as Orthodox saints (2000). To analyze these religious projects, the paper introduces the concept of pious labour (Bielo 2020). It argues that pious labour is a collective effort of believers which aims at binding together tangible and intangible parts of the religious infrastructure. In contrast to pilgrims and religious tourists who come to sacred places to consume grace, participants in the processions of the cross produce grace by doing the pious labour of keeping their religious ecosystem coherent and well-integrated. The paper also aims to think about the mysticism of the Orthodox Christianity ethnographically.

A Road to Citizenship — A City to the World.

Infrastructural Changes in the Sanctuary of Divino Amore (Rome)

Pietro Vereni (Tor Vergata U of Rome - Trinity College Rome Campus)

This presentation will reflect on a twofold change in the infrastructure supporting the Sanctuary of Divino Amore. The Sanctuary is located about 20 km from the city centre of Rome and currently has two churches, one built in 1745 and the other inaugurated in 1999.

1. From Pilgrimage to Procession. The distance to the centre has obviously remained unchanged, but the 'distance to Rome' has progressively decreased with urban expansion. Rome had been contained within the perimeter of the Aurelian Walls—and surrounded by the wild Agro Romano—until the unification of 1870. The growth of the modern, contemporary city has meant that for many years it has been possible to get to the Sanctuary using public transport buses, thus remaining 'inside the city' also in terms of access infrastructure. This has produced a structural change in the direction of the route. Originally, the shrine was to all intents and purposes a place of pilgrimage (understood as the crossing of an unknown place to reach a sacred centre of power) for the citizens of Rome, but progressively the pilgrimage has been transformed into a procession (i.e., the confirmation of the symbolic possession of that urban territory by the participants). In my presentation I would like to discuss how much this change has impacted on the connection between 'going to the Divino Amore' and 'being recognized as a Roman citizen'.

2. The Globalization of the City. We define universalism as the willingness of any entity to incorporate into itself the difference that comes from outside, and instead globalization as the reverse movement, of exporting one's identity specificity elsewhere. Roman Catholicism is, by definition, 'universal', and Catholic cosmopolitanism in Rome has historically taken the form of universalism, not

globalization. Rome embraced difference by asking it to surrender and belong, and Roman Catholicism has long maintained its localizing provincialism: come here, foreigner, and become Roman too. By contrast, the second Shrine Church, strongly desired by JPII, has precisely the aim, as an infrastructure, to globalize the Catholic Church of Rome. Built in an entirely de-territorialized style, it resembles the place-less buildings of the starchitects and was designed not as a pilgrimage destination, but as a centre from where to broadcast images and sounds. There are no traces of human bodies (instead indispensable in the first church, overflowing with 'ex-votos') and the whole architecture (from the altar to the baptismal font, from the organ to the shape of the pews for the faithful) refers to a completely deterritorialized idea of the Catholic message, which from such an abstract broadcasting centre can be radiated throughout the world in a uniform way. The presentation will discuss to what extent this project of globalization of Roman Catholicism has proved effective or has had to yield to the resistance of Roman localism.

**Panel
Seven:**

**Politics of Surveillance
and Circulation**

Sociotechnical (re)configurations of Hajj: A Study of the Motawif Booking System

Nadia Caidi (U Toronto), **Deena Abul-Fottouh** (McMaster), **Jie Wu** (Renmin U, China), & **Argane Goel** (U Toronto Scarborough)

On June 7, 2022, the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah released a new booking system, Motawif, to enable pilgrims stemming from Europe, America and Australia to make their travel arrangements for the Hajj pilgrimage. News of the release was chaotic and unstructured, and resulted in an intense social media conversation about the effectiveness of the new system and the timing of the launch. Indeed, Motawif was deployed just a few weeks before the 2022 Hajj, and without the knowledge of hajj tour operators from the affected regions (they learnt about the system at the same time as the pilgrims themselves).

Our study examines the social media conversations that took place around the deployment and launch of the Motawif booking system. Using computational methods, we undertook a network analysis and content and sentiment analysis of the Twitter space during the timeframe corresponding to the launch of the system up to the end of the Hajj 2022/1443 pilgrimage. We were thus able to get a snapshot of the networks (and content) of conversations that took place online around the reception and perceptions of, and experiences with, the Motawif booking system by those pilgrims seeking to complete that year's Hajj. Using network analysis, we were also able to identify the main stakeholders that engaged in these Twitter conversations around the Motawif system. Our findings point to a range of issues surrounding the design and deployment of social media platforms that underpin pilgrimage rituals and preparations, and shed light on broader systemic issues around transparency and accountability of key stakeholders, the broader political economy of the Hajj including the evolving role of the hajj tour operators, and the place of holy sites in a broader national strategy and vision for the future (particularly around religious tourism). As well, our findings point to the socio-technical aspects surrounding the design of Motawif including assumptions and biases, along with the role that social media and digital networks play in enabling communities to share experiences and mobilize, and to (potentially) hold actors accountable.

Saudi Arabia, Vision 2030 and the Failed Infrastructure of Hajj in 2022: UK Pilgrimage Organizers and Pilgrims' Perspectives on a New Private Online Travel Agency for Western Muslims

Sean McLoughlin (U Leeds)

Long (1979) and ('British Muslims') Badawi and Sardar (1979; Sardar 2004; 2014) began to explore the challenges of administrating Hajj infrastructure in a rapidly changing Saudi Arabia during the late 1960s and 1970s. However, since then, tourism and management scholars have developed such work only tentatively often with relatively narrow conceptual frames and thin empirical data (Henderson 2011). In an age of ever more intensive and extensive globalization (Appadurai 1996), when (religious) tourism is at the heart of Saudi Arabia's modernizing Vision 2030), the infrastructure of the late modern Hajj remains relatively under-researched. Bianchi (2004) has produced a detailed survey of the politics of Hajj management in non-Arab countries but this refers only in passing to the materialities of the pilgrimage among 30M Muslim minorities established in Europe, the Americas and Australasia. Indeed, there is still no systematic investigation that explores such sacred journeys in terms of 'glocal' patterns of organization (McLoughlin 2013; 2018; 2019; 2020; 2022). Between 2006 and 2022 Britain had the largest number of businesses (117) licensed by Saudi Arabia to organize Hajj packages in Western countries. However, just weeks before the first scaled-up, post-Covid pilgrimage was due to commence in 2022, a new Ministry of Hajj and Umrah-accredited private online travel agency (OTA) was launched to serve pilgrims among more than 30 million Muslims in the West. Based on interviews with UK Hajj organizers who have lost a key part of their business and returning pilgrims who travelled without UK guides in 2022, I will discuss a case study of the failure of this new OTA with attention to the materialities of pilgrimage online booking systems, transportation and accommodation, guiding and administration. I

Policing Pilgrims and Pretenders: Russians on Mount Athos in the Late 19th–Early 20th Century

Luke Jeske (U of North Carolina – Chapel Hill)

Over the late 19th and early 20th century, thousands of Russian pilgrims visited Mount Athos, the male-only epicenter of Orthodox monasticism. Seizing the opportunities afforded by industrialized travel, these voyagers embodied the populist impulses running through the Russian Orthodox Church at this time. Pilgrims were eager to develop themselves spiritually on the 'garden of the Theotokos' while in the presence of sacred relics and 'angelic' monks, staying for periods ranging from days to years. But Russian diplomats and clergymen, charged with the legal and spiritual surveillance and policing, respectively, of these pilgrims expressed among themselves and the broader public much concern. Athonite pilgrims, for example, sometimes claimed to have taken monastic vows during their journeys, a fact all but impossible to corroborate. Presenting themselves as members of the clerical estate (*dukhovnoe soslovie*), such pilgrims drew the ire of customs and local officials who had to resolve the discrepancy between subjects' legally recognized estates and self-presentation.

**Panel
Eight:**

Final Reflections

[Eade, Kaur, McLoughlin, Caidi, and discussion]