CENTENNIAL CONFERENCE OF THE COMITE INTERNATIONAL DES SCIENCES HISTORIQUES

Urban History: Past, Present, and Future (Roundtable)

Programme Event

International Committee of Historical Sciences | 26–30 August 2026 | Leipzig, Germany

DATE	LOCATION
28 Aug 2026, 11:00 - 13:30	House 5 SR143
THEME	CONFERENCE
J - Connections, Entanglements, and Universal Perspectives on History	International Committee of Historical Sciences

Overview

Over millennia, cities and towns have gained an increasing importance in human history as places organizing governance, economy and culture well beyond the numerical proportion of their inhabitants in any given society. They have emerged as creations of large and small-scale historical processes and have at the same time actively contributed to the course of global events and the (re)production of power. This international and cross-disciplinary panel offers an overview of historical research on this settlement type by reviewing how over the last 100 years changing approaches and historiographic turns affected and shaped the scholarly notion of cities and urbanity over time. The panel is organized as a roundtable with a series of positional statements by the panellists and a discussion with the audience. The statements will follow the main trends in thinking historically about cities: their perception as legally distinct communities; the growing interest in social and economic history from the 1960s; the impact of critical theory and spatial and cultural turns from the 1980s and ‘90s onwards and will close with a view on global trends and perspectives on the discipline. The overall aim is to offer a comprehensive and critical understanding of urban histories in Europe and beyond, from the early twentieth century to the present. The proposed session also profiles Urban History as an interdisciplinary field, with close connections to other subjects, and discusses its relevance for the future.

Participants

Convenor

- Keith Lilley (Queen’s University Belfast)

Panelists

- Katalin Szende (Central European University)
- Steinar Aas (Nord University)
- Keith Lilley (Queen’s University Belfast)
- Rosemary Sweet (University of Leicester)
- Carl Nightingale (University of Buffalo)
- Roman Czaja (Nicolaus Copernicus University Toru ?)

Papers

Legal approaches to urban history – then and now

Katalin Szende (Central European University)

Social turns: intersectionality and urban history

Steinar Aas (Nord University), Roman Czaja (Nicolaus Copernicus University Toru ?)

Spatial turns: from analogue to digital urban spaces

Keith Lilley (Queen’s University Belfast)

Cultural turns: cities as stages and as agents of history

Rosemary Sweet (University of Leicester)

Mapping the future of cities and of urban history

Carl Nightingale (University of Buffalo)

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