

SERF Research Agenda conference discussion points for the Urban Theme

Urban chronologies:

Roman

- What were the origins of the major urban centres and how did they evolve?
- What were the origins of the minor urban centres and how did they evolve?
- How did towns act as a melting-pot for Roman and indigenous social and economic interaction?
- How did towns relate to their hinterland? Do towns have a separate, distinctive role?
- How, when and why did towns cease to function?

Anglo-Saxon

- What evidence do we have for emerging ports of trade?
- What is the role of minsters in the development of urban places?
- How do urban places emerge in the later Anglo-Saxon period? How urban are they really?
- Do towns have a distinctive economic and social role, separate from the countryside?

Medieval

- What did towns look like at the time of Domesday Book and how did they function?
- How does the role of towns evolve in relation to changing economic and political factors?
- How do towns relate to each other and their surrounding countryside?
- What is the impact of the increasing presence of London?

Post-Medieval

- How does the urban hierarchy evolve? How is it influenced by the presence of London?

Urban components:

- How did urban forms evolve through the centuries?
- How is the governmental, social, economic and religious function of towns expressed in its overall form, its components and its structures? How does this change through time?
- Can we see distinctive urban material cultures?

Urban systems:

- How do towns relate to their hinterlands?
- Do urban hierarchies rise and fall? What are the drivers for this?
- How do towns relate to political territorial frameworks? How do towns reflect political and economic systems?

- What is the impact on urban development of the region's long coast and the proximity of continental Europe?

Approaches to the study of towns:

- How can documentary evidence be integrated archaeological and other approaches?
- How can we effectively utilise plan-form analysis?
- How do we effectively use open area excavation and alternatively sampling?
- How can we develop artefactual studies to provide meaningful insights into wider social and economic questions?
- How can we progress enquiries into urban environmental histories?
- How can we effectively embrace the study of buildings within urban history?
- Where should we be promoting in-depth urban historical research?
- What skills shortages do we presently have for the study of the towns of the regions?
- What can local groups and individual researchers contribute to the study of towns of the region?
- How can we evaluate data from the region against externally derived hypotheses?