

## Abstracts of articles

*Helen Hills*

### **Mapping the early modern city**

This paper analyses in their political context the festival decorations created by Paolo Amato, architect to the Senate of Palermo, in 1686 for the festival of the patron saint of that city. One of these decorations, that of the main altar in the cathedral, is of particular interest in that it represents a map of the city itself. An analysis of this map in relation to other seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century maps of Palermo reveals its political and social aim and biases, but also shows that it was unusually up to date and accurate as a representation of the city at that date. Such a representation not only marks a striking cul-de-sac in the history of the development of cartography, but sheds light on the relationship between forging politically acceptable identities for a city and their representation in the early modern period. The map in particular, but all the decorations, or *apparati*, in general are interpreted in the context of the weakened Spanish empire (to which Sicily belonged) and of the internal politics of the island and of Palermo.

*Rosemary Sweet*

### **The production of urban histories in eighteenth-century England**

Much of our knowledge concerning the 'urban renaissance' in eighteenth-century provincial towns comes from a reading of contemporary urban histories. Too often they are referred to purely for their factual information, and insufficient consideration is given to their relationship to the society for which they were written. This article examines in detail the series of histories written in Newcastle over the long eighteenth century. Although the content of these histories can appear formulaic, with considerable borrowings of material, there are significant differences. These reflect the different agenda which the respective authors were addressing and the changing composition of the readership. Urban

histories can provide an invaluable insight into the dynamics of urban society and the way in which contemporaries perceived and presented it.

*John Sheail*

**Town wastes, agricultural sustainability and Victorian sewerage**

In analysing the practicability of Victorian proposals to dispose of urban wastes, valuable insights may be gained from the commentaries of agriculturalists and their scientific advisers. The paper reconstructs the debate as to how the sewage of towns and cities might be transferred to farmland, the developing concepts of sewage farming and the 'sewage farm', the increasing disillusionment of farmers with sewage irrigation and, finally, the acknowledgement by the turn of the century that the recycling of such wastes was irrelevant to the needs of town and country alike.

*James Borchert*

**Cities in the suburbs: heterogeneous communities on the US urban fringe, 1920–60**

While the scholarly literature largely ignores issues of suburban population size, density and heterogeneity, during the 1920s a number of large, densely-settled, heterogeneous suburbs emerged on the fringe of the largest US cities. The article identifies forty-one of these potential 'city suburbs' which are defined as communities having minimum thresholds of 25,000 population and residential densities of 6,000 per square mile. City suburbs may have claimed nearly 25 per cent of the suburban populations of the nation's ten largest metropolitan districts. Drawing largely on data for midwestern cities, city suburbs are further identified through their diverse populations by class, ethnicity and race; varied housing stocks and economic activities including retailing, professional services and manufacturing; and political independence from their central city. Nearly equally divided between residential and industrial suburbs, the former, including Oak Park, Illinois, 'fit' traditional middle-class suburban descriptions while neighbouring Cicero represented working-class, industrial communities.