

Abstracts of articles

Lynn Hollen Lees

The challenge of political change: urban history in the 1990s

Urban history is a rapidly expanding, flourishing field in Europe. Nevertheless, urban scholars would do well to re-examine the paradigms within which they have been working as the field today lacks central questions and general interpretive models. Moreover, the common focus on urban biography or upon one region within a single nation-state has become increasingly outmoded, given the international scale of economic processes and migration flows. More attention to topics treated within a European-wide or even international context is needed. In addition, urban history as currently defined is tilted towards social and economic concerns to the neglect of the political arena.

David Garrioch

House names, shop signs and social organization in Western European cities, 1500-1900

The houses in early modern European cities almost all had names and signs. These are usually taken to be an early form of advertising, or else a way of finding one's way around the city in times before street names and numbering. This article argues that their primary purpose was to mark the individual, family or ethnic identity of the house owner or tenant. During the eighteenth century the names and signs changed in character, and by the mid-nineteenth century they had almost disappeared from city centres, primarily as a result of changes in individual and family identity among the urban middle classes, and of the transformation of neighbourhood communities under the pressure of urban economic and social integration. The evolution of house names and shop signs therefore illustrates the changing relationship between the city's residents and the urban environment.

*Kiki Kafkoura***In search of urban reform: co-operative housing in inter-war Athens**

In spite of the campaigns for social housing conducted by its most ardent supporters, at the beginning of the century Greece completely lacked the various low-cost housing organizations that were quite common in Europe. During the inter-war period, progressive governments took various steps to rationalize the provision of housing, aiming, among others, at encouraging the formation of housing co-operatives. Under the provisions of appropriate legislation, housing co-operatives acquired land on favourable terms either in or outside the city of Athens. The proposed schemes, which were meant to be supported by state funds, were, however, inadequately administered, mainly because of the political instability and economic hardships of the inter-war period. As a result, the function of the housing co-operatives was gradually restricted to providing small investors with cheap land, on which they would build individually at a more convenient time. The happy exceptions to the rule were co-operative housing schemes which owed their implementation to the higher economic and social status of their members.

*Renu Thakur***Urban hierarchies, typologies and classification in early medieval India:
c. 750-1200**

Architectural treatises and inscriptional evidence from buildings, artefacts and monuments are used to identify the different terms ascribed to urban settlements in medieval India. These sources reveal the diversity of terms used to describe towns and cities, and accordingly the diversity of functions associated with them. The linguistic variations employed indicate how urban functions changed over time, and convey contemporary perceptions of an urban hierarchy based on a functional classification or typology of towns.

*Pamela Sharpe***De-industrialization and re-industrialization: women's employment and the changing character of Colchester, 1700-1850**

The relationship between changes in the local economy of the town and region of Colchester are explored in relation to women's employment opportunities. Economic decline and technological change in the woollen industry, as well as diminishing agricultural work for females, provided a 'push' factor for women to move to Colchester. In the town, urban rejuvenation meant expansion in the service sector. Yet Colchester was unable to absorb all the labouring women who moved there. Employers introduced new types of industry, characteristically by expanding from retailing to manufacture. The sweated trades produced silk, shoes and ready-made clothes. A process of re-industrialization was, then, engendered by the availability of cheap female labour.