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The concept of «townships» in Britain and the British colonies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

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Abstract

Descriptive terms often persist even when the objects or phenomena described change. Any one term can come to have many meanings. «Township» is such a term with different meanings: a «township» was not always different from a «town», nor was it always synonymous with a «town». At the time when «township» was acquiring a new function and significance in Britain, its multiple usage was carried into New England where the term was then newly applied. This paper argues that from its original meaning, the term «township» acquired new meanings and that as the term diffused, so its meaning was modified. It also argues that when such a term comes to be used widely throughout the world, its use can be made to throw light on the diffusion of the concept and of the object or phenomena to which it refers.



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