



Università
Ca'Foscari
Venezia

PROJECT ACRONYM AND TITLE: Water-Cultures: The Water Cultures of Italy, 1500-1900

FUNDING PROGRAMME: Horizon 2020

CALL: H2020 – ERC – Advanced Grant 2018

KEYWORDS: water and the sacred; thermal springs; mineral waters; water and health/disease; cholera; sanitation; hydraulic systems and infrastructure; water supply management; water access; irrigation and land reclamation; water-related occupations; circulation of hydrological knowledge and expertise; social and cultural history; environmental history; architectural history; history of medicine, science and technology; hydraulic archaeology; landscape archaeology; social and cultural history; early modern Italy

HOST DEPARTMENT: Department of Humanities

SCIENTIFIC RESPONSIBLE: Prof. David Gentilcore

FINANCIAL DATA:

Project total costs	Overall funding assigned to UNIVE
€ 2.444.549,00	€ 2.433.520,25

ABSTRACT:

Behind this project lies a paradox: water, although vital for life, has historically had little intrinsic value. Considered base and common as a drink, it was nevertheless the most symbolically charged of the elements; of limited monetary value in and of itself, access to it was in fact hard-fought, the foundation and driving force of society. The Water Cultures project aims to create a new field of study, based around the social and cultural history of a people's polyvalent interactions with water, applicable to a wide range of places and times. The project proposes an epistemological method of structuring, analysing and presenting the diverse range of findings and approaches into a new holistic understanding. The Water Cultures concept is based on the synergistic braiding of five key 'Streams': the symbolic beliefs and practices associated with water; the circulation and evolution of knowledge about water and disease and its effects; the water management systems of large cities and demands on them; the changing hydraulic landscape of rural areas; and the occupations of water, exploring the professions and trades associated with water and its delivery and uses. Italy has been chosen as the case study—for its rich archives and social, political and geographical variety. The Italian history of water, from the 1500s to the end of the 19th century, is a story of authority and conflict, social hierarchy and material realities, changing medical and scientific knowledge and technological expertise, and religious beliefs and practices. Yet Italian historians have undervalued water and its uses. This transformative project conceptualises a new way of writing history, with water at its core. It proposes the history and culture of a given society, the construction of identities and forms of self-representation based on relationships and interactions with water: the ways of controlling, using and conceiving it, and the symbolic, creative and material dimensions it assumed.

Planned Start date at UNIVE	Planned End date at UNIVE
November 1st, 2019	September 30th, 2024

Host Institution:

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Italy

Lead Partner/Coordinator