

The Water Cultures of Italy, 1500-1900

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1. *General concept*

What would a history of a society look like with water placed at its core? The Water Cultures concept creates a new holistic approach to the study of human interactions with water over time. It enables us *to write the history and culture of a given society*, the construction of its identities and forms of self-representation, based on its changing relationships with water: the ways of controlling, using and conceiving it; the religious, symbolic and knowledge dimensions it assumes, and the forms of cultural production it leads to. By ‘water cultures’, I mean both material aspects (such as hydraulic engineering, water capture techniques, legislation, and management) and non-material features (symbolic responses, beliefs and practices, changing knowledge).

The project focuses on Italy, with its unparalleled wealth and variety of *archival resources*, combined with Italy’s rich print history, which can effectively document the ways in which the history of water is a story of political authority and conflict, social hierarchy and material realities, changing medical and scientific knowledge and technological expertise, and religious beliefs and practices. The project’s temporal span is 1500-1900, an extended periodisation, in order to track changes and continuities, local variations and regional patterns.

2. *Research design*

The Water Cultures concept consists of five inter-related *Streams*, each of which is subdivided into *Themes*. These are outlined in the five tables below. They have been chosen because: a) they represent the most important elements, approaches and ways of understanding Water Cultures; b) they can inform and shape one another, as they are taken forward; and c) they constitute innovative subject areas in their own right and fill wide knowledge gaps, where the team can make significant contributions both to the individual Themes and towards the broader Water Cultures concept.

Each Theme is assigned to a different member of the Water Cultures team, which consists of three PhDs and three Post-doctoral research assistants (PDRAs). As PI, I will be leading from the front, contributing to each of the Streams and guiding the work of the project team.

3. *Note for PhD applicants*

You will find three suggested PhD topics (with a fourth in reserve) in the description of the five research Streams (below). They focus around the history of thermal springs, mineral waters and rural infrastructures/small towns, respectively.

These proposed topics are intentionally kept fairly broad; it is hoped that you will have *your own particular research focus*, either in terms of the proposed geographical and/or

chronological coverage or perhaps in terms of the methodologies, approaches and sources to be used in your own research.

It is *not* expected that each PhD topic will aim to cover all of Italy or indeed the entire extended period of the overall Water Cultures project. Nor are the proposed topics prescriptive: PhD proposals on other topics, related to areas covered by the overall Water Cultures project, *will also be considered*.

Stream 1. Springs: from sacred waters to bottled waters

Focusing on water sources such as springs, this Stream explores the complex overlap between the sacred, the medical and the commercial. It links closely to Stream 2, as well as the hydraulic cultures to be explored in Stream 4.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Objectives, to investigate:</i>	<i>Key sources and methodologies</i>
<i>Thermal springs</i>	- religious and medical influences in the development of spas	Travel accounts, diaries, correspondence and medical case-books. <i>QIM</i> .
PhD 1 (yrs 2-5)	- social and cultural change over time, especially in-between the more-studied Renaissance and 19 th -century periods	Archival records of individual spas and associated institutions, such as hospitals. <i>MM</i> . Medical treatises on individual spas. <i>QIM</i> .
<i>Mineral waters</i>	- medicalisation and commercialisation of mineral waters over the extended period	Local guidebooks, economic, topographical and medical surveys. Quantitative methodology (=QtM). Medical consultations and case-books. <i>MM</i> .
PhD 2 (yrs 2-5)	- role played by the ‘century of cholera’ in their success To provide an Italian history of mineral waters	Chemical analyses of mineral waters. <i>QIM</i> . Company archives of bottled water manufacturers. <i>MM</i> .

Stream 2. The science and health of water

This Stream explores how the science and medicine of water changed over the full period, how this affected water use and consumption, and how both responded to Asiatic cholera. It informs all the other Streams.

Stream 3. Supplying Italian Cities: Large-Scale Hydrological Infrastructure and Water Management

The capacity to deliver water made the city possible, as did the ability to discharge waste. This Stream focuses on the city of Naples, in close comparison to other Italian cities, and on the competing demands put on the urban water supply. It braids with Stream 4, on rural areas, and Stream 5, on occupations.

Stream 4. The hydraulic landscape: irrigation, land reclamation and rural water management

Rural Italy, the subject of this Stream, comprised markedly different hydraulic landscapes, which gave rise to a wide variety of mitigation strategies. This extended to small towns, forced to make the most of the water resources available, often with little assistance on the part of the State. It links with Streams 1, 3 and 5.

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Objectives, to investigate</i>	<i>Key sources and methodologies</i>
<i>Rural infra-structures</i>	- how water was managed in rural Italy and how these systems evolved over the extended period	Agronomical treatises. <i>QIM</i> . Land surveys (which describe the nature of each water resource). <i>MM</i> .
PhD 3 (yrs 2-5)	- the social values associated with the different water use systems - the impact made by governments	Stefano Jacini's Parliamentary Inquiry into rural conditions, 1881-90. <i>QIM</i> .
<i>ALTERNATIVE</i>		
<i>TOPIC:</i>		
<i>The water supply of small towns</i>	How small towns managed their water supply The differences in water management between regions, with the large cities, and over time response to disease and epidemics	Town council minutes. Data from a sample of small towns will be quantified, including coding of topics discussed and decisions reached and/or responses taken. <i>QIM</i> . Confraternity, tax, parish and diocesan records. <i>QIM</i> . Local histories. <i>QIM</i> .

Stream 5. The occupations of water: skills, status and interactions

This Stream focuses on the range of actors involved in supplying and utilising water and their social and cultural worlds: how they learnt, how they practised and earned a living, how knowledge and skills circulated. It interweaves with Streams 2, on the science of water, and 3 and 4, on urban and rural water systems, respectively.