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WATER-CULTURES PROJECT *The Water Cultures of Italy, 1500-1900*
ERC 2018 Advanced Grant - 833834
Principal Investigator Prof. DAVID GENTILCORE

CALL FOR CHAPTER PROPOSALS

***The Longue Durée of Sanitation:
Changing Knowledge, Management and Infrastructures
in Urban Europe and the Mediterranean, 1500-1900***

Editors: David Gentilcore and Salvatore Valenti (Ca' Foscari, University of Venice)
Publisher: Bloomsbury

We invite **chapter proposals** from a wide range of disciplines interested in the study of sanitary practices, forms of knowledge, and infrastructure in the European and Mediterranean past (**1500-1900**). Contributions are welcomed from the history of science and medicine, social and cultural history, urban history, gender history, engineering history, environmental history, and archaeology, employing a wide range of source materials (archival, print, literary, artistic) and approaches and methodologies. Contributions which encompass the **southern and eastern Mediterranean regions** are particularly encouraged.

The Longue Durée of Sanitation explores the evolution of knowledge, practices and infrastructure in European and Mediterranean cities during the early- and late-modern periods, taking as its starting point the fact that combined sewers are the product of historical contingencies, and not some ambiguous, unmeasurable stage of civilisation. It analyses the knowledge of architects, engineers and related professions regarding the problem of human waste management, the social perception of faeces and sensory experience, over the extended period. It also examines nineteenth-century debates among various professionals, primarily engineers and physicians, regarding the methods of addressing urban sanitation issues, the transfer of knowledge from Western Europe to different regions, and how perceptions of dirt and social worth were utilised to design urban spaces in conjunction with the expansion of Western capitalism.

We take the perspective of Science and Technology Studies that technology is never neutral, but that cultural and social values are woven into it. Sanitary infrastructures are a complex assemblage of heterogeneous elements such as politics, power, capital, technology, culture and everyday practices. They contribute to the creation of **a geography of privileged areas and social groups whilst marginalising others**. Social conflicts, material interests and constraints, and the adaptation of pre-existing infrastructures are often obscured by the nineteenth-century discourse of improvement and progress associated with sanitary infrastructures, as carriers of a better society, which was part of their cultural value.

The *longue durée* approach helps to **avoid misinterpreting the history of sanitation and losing sight of the connections** between the early- and late-modern periods. These connections and long-term continuities in habits and attitudes towards urban sanitation were more significant than nineteenth century sanitarians openly admitted, with their rhetoric of progress. In particular, the relative absence or weakness of State regulations in early modern times did not result in the occurrence of irresponsible and irrational individual behaviour.

In order to provide an convincing account of sanitation practices in early- and late-modern cities, the book considers the multiple actors involved in the processes of keeping the urban environment healthy according to the standards of each society.

Suggested topics for chapters include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Sensory experience
- Scientific, and vernacular knowledge
- Material objects
- Racial and gender differences
- Environmental quality (perception and assessment)
- Professions
- The economy of waste
- Management models (centralised, shared)
- Infrastructure

Scholars working in these fields are encouraged to submit a detailed chapter proposal of between 1,000 to 2,000 words via email to salvatore.valenti@unive.it. In the proposal, the topic of the proposed chapter and how it contributes to the themes of book should be clearly outlined.

The **deadline for chapter proposals is 14 March 2025**. Acceptance of the proposals will be communicated by the end of March, along with the style guidelines of the publisher of the volume, which is Bloomsbury.

Once accepted, **the full chapter**, which should be approximately 9,500 words in length (including references), is to be submitted by **31 May 2025**.

All enquiries may be directed to Dr Salvatore Valenti at salvatore.valenti@unive.it.