

Liquid streets: early modern waterways in urban spaces

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The image of urban canals is readily associated today with specific cities, such as Venice, Amsterdam, or Recife. In the early modern period, however, waterways were a commonplace feature of most urban landscapes: this paper will focus on Augsburg and Florence as two representative examples. If in Augsburg, indeed, the extensive medieval and early modern network has been largely preserved, traces of its smaller counterpart in Florence have all but disappeared. The urban canals of early modern Augsburg and Florence performed a multiplicity of functions, from the transport of goods and people to the supply of energy, from waste disposal to bodily hygiene. Comparing these functions to those performed by a 'dry' street, this paper will argue that thinking about urban waterways as 'liquid' streets can help us conceptualise their role in the early modern city.

Palavras-chave / Keywords:

Water; canals; transport; hygiene; energy.

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