



Keynote: Water mobility heritage and fluvial adventures: the enchantment of waterscapes as environmental apprenticeship

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The seduction of waterscapes is a shared value interacting with the complex whole of perceptions that continuously evolve throughout our educational processes. Within the fruitful interaction between geography and environmental psychology, it is possible to delve into both individual and collective water-related emotions, stirred up by the cultural context, with its symbols, representations and practices. This topic entails a captivating research trajectory in which the concept of hydrophilia can easily be summarised. The relationship between water mobility and inland waterscapes is among the most effective interpretative tools for understanding and directly experiencing hydrophilic emotions. Consequently, water mobility can be related to the idea of floating hydrophilia, involving not only the practicality of the means of transport but also the emotional dimension of experiencing waterscapes.

Despite the fruitful outputs coming from this research field, very few studies consider the whole of nautical practices as a performative relationship, both individual and social, with inland waterscapes. We can rely on a wide number of tangible documents witnessing the practical goals and multifaceted agencies of fluvial transport, while any feeling of affection or emotional appreciation about navigation lies silent and hidden among the mysterious sediments of history. The charm of a floating perspective is an intriguing pathway worth considering and exploring.

Water mobility obviously depends on boats, whose immense array of typologies goes along with the extraordinary variety of waterways flowing on every continent. Inland navigation is thereby one of the most meaningful operative activities able to express millennial relationships between societies and waterscapes. The wooden materiality of boats is the perfect interface between the biosphere (trees for the plating of hulls) and the hydrosphere (rivers and canals): that is, the nonhuman floating materiality supporting the effectiveness of the watery perspective. The inborn appreciation of waterscapes has fuelled a wide set of cultural expressions, ranging from fine arts to literature, with special regard to travelogues and landscape painting. As for the latter, boats and fluvial navigation were the prevailing subjects recalling human activity in watery iconographies since Renaissance Italy and Flanders.

The reinforcement of inland hydrography as a waterway network is narrowly related to the history of exploration, where water mobility epitomises the sense of fluvial adventures. A wide array of exploration practices is indeed an exciting discovery of continental hydrography, afterward enabling

regular upstream navigation strictly related to colonial expansion. Extractive capitalism was supporting new aims in fluvial adventures, while the blank spaces in tropical maps were disappearing. New boats appeared for new travellers; steamboats became the praising icon of Western civilisation.

Finally, the process of watery apprenticeship is much more effective when navigating than simply following the waterway along its bank pathways. The floating mobility makes it easier to become knowledgeable about the many primary characters of fluvial environments, including both cultural heritages and ecosystem dynamics. This is the primacy of hydro-perspectivism, which fully allows the rediscovery of the complexity of waterscapes and enhances the pleasure to realise, through individual introspection, one's own affection for blue space.