CFP: Resilient Palaces. Civic architecture as a mirror and tool of urban adaptability (12th-17th centuries)

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Session 4.4

Resilient Palaces. Civic architecture as a mirror and tool of urban adaptability (12th-17th centuries)

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Since the Middle Ages, the urban landscape of Italian cities has been marked by the presence of public palaces and civic architecture: buildings, monuments, infrastructures that fulfilled multiple functions for collective use, embodying the civil identity of the inhabitants. Those building have always maintained a crucial role in the public life and cultural landscape of Italian cities as places of self-representation for civic authorities and their policies for 'good government' up to the present day.

This deep and vital link with the history of city's communities has not, however, been without consequences: far from setting up a lasting 'typology', over time public palaces have been asked to perform a variety of material and symbolic functions, generating continuous, sometimes drastic processes of transformation, not only in terms of use and decoration, but also in structural and architectural terms. So much so that even those buildings and models that appear to be the result of genuinely 'original' persistences are often only the fruit of 19th-20th century reconstructions and stylistic restorations.

In this long-term framework, this session aims to focus on turning points, breaks, restructuring/reconversion steps after dramatic events: fires, wars, plague epidemics; the establishment of seigniorial powers or the subjugation to dominant cities; the shift towards forms of oligarchic power. Special attention will be paid to cross-cutting approaches, highlighting the complexity of historical processes in urban contexts and the permeability of architecture to political, social and cultural factors.

To submit a paper proposal by 31 March 2022