



Ca' Foscari  
University  
of Venice

Department of Philosophy  
and Cultural Heritage



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**FARE**  
RICERCA IN ITALIA

FRAMEWORK PER L'ATTRAZIONE E IL RAFFORZAMENTO  
DELLE ECCELLENZE PER LA RICERCA IN ITALIA

Fondazione  
**CARIPLO** 

**May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

h. 4.00 p.m.

Aula Biral,

Malcanton-Marcorà

**Organizers:**

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Image: Emblem of *salus publica* from Andrea Alciato,  
*Emblemata* (1621)  
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Crisis and Change in Early Modernity:  
Knowledge, Practice, Governance

## **'Malignità che s'infonde': Rice, Medicine and Liminality in Counter-Reformation Milan**

**Lavinia Maddaluno**

Ca' Foscari University of Venice

In 1576, Cardinal Carlo Borromeo issued an edict on rice cultivation, in order to allow his tenant farmers to exploit uncultivated lands. His edict broke with the Sforza and Spanish legislation on the matter: this legislation established that, for medical reasons plunging their roots in neo-Hippocratic ideas, a distance of four miles had to be respected between rice fields and any urban center. Cardinal Borromeo's edicts did not only represent a threat to public health, but also to State sovereignty. This paper argues that controlling the influence of environmental factors was not only a medical imperative, but also a social, moral, and economic one during the Counter-Reformation. The paper will take into account the petitions of various social actors in the context of conflicts regarding stagnant waters and contemporary medical texts on air and water, especially Ludovico Settala's *In librum Hippocratis Coi de aeribus, aquis, locis, commentarii* (1590). It will then put these in dialogue with debates on reason of state, represented, in the Milanese context, by Settala's *Sulla Ragion di Stato Libri Sette* (1627), thus showing how medical theory could turn into political practices.



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