May 11th, 2023
h. 4.00 p.m.
Aula Biral,
Malcanton-Marcorà

Organizers:
Jonathan Regier, Ca’ Foscari University of Venice, Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage
Pietro Daniel Omodeo, Ca’ Foscari University of Venice, Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage
Max Planck Partner Group “The Water City” (Max Planck Society / MPI for the History of Science - Berlin)
ERC “EarlyModernCosmology” (Horizon 2020, GA 725883)
Project “EarlyGeoPraxis” (FARE, Italian Ministry of University and Research)

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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.