Architectural Histories

Delzant, J-B. 2024. Between Communes, Signorie, and Papal Government: Public Palaces in the Papal State (Late 14th to Early 15th Centuries). *Architectural Histories*, 12(1): pp. 1–22. DOI: https://doi.org/10.16995/ah.10437

Open Library of Humanities

Between Communes, Signorie, and Papal Government: Public Palaces in the Papal State (Late 14th to Early 15th Centuries)

Jean-Baptiste Delzant, Université Paris Cité, FR, jean-baptiste.delzant@u-paris.fr

The takeover of the Papal State by the Pope himself during the 15th century brought an end to the domination of many powerful lordly families. Communal institutions were often reestablished, and controlled by a representative of the pope but just as the development of urban lordships had not seen the disappearance of communal institutions and their old public palaces, the arrival of the papal administration did not always lead to the construction of new buildings. Based on cases situated mainly in the two provinces of the Duchy of Spoleto and the March of Ancona, this article shows how different urban governments (both seigneurial and pontifical) of the late Trecento and early Quattrocento were able to use the buildings created by a power they were trying to replace or with which they had to collaborate for their own benefit. Communal palaces received special attention from the new rulers: they were part of urban identity and symbolized the idea of a government based on the consent of the people, necessary for the legitimacy of any kind of leadership.

Keywords: medieval Italy; Papal State; urban lordship and *signorie*; commune; public palaces; seigneurial residences

Introduction

Wherever they have developed in northern and central Italy, the communes *di Popolo* have displayed an intense urbanistic activity, featuring facilities and infrastructures. New seats were built for collective governments: in addition to the collegial bodies of communal power, public palaces lodged the parties (popular, Gibelin or Guelph), as well as the main corporations (Arts) and public administration. Year after year, more and more of these palaces were built, always bigger and always more decorated than the previous ones. Through them, the *Popolo* pretended to be the representative of the whole civic community. As Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur has pointed out (2008: 233), what was then created, with these new palaces, was not a space for a particular power but the place of power itself, secular and collective, and to whose sacralization these buildings had to contribute.

At the end of the Middle Ages when power passed into other hands, the communes did not disappear, even when their prerogatives were considerably underminded and they were associated with, or even subjected to, seigneurial or pontifical power. In this article, I examine what effects changes, which were at times radical, in government in central Italy (more precisely the Marca anconitana and the Ducato di Spoleto in the Papal State between the end of the 14th and the middle of the 15th centuries (**Figure 1**)), had on spaces and buildings created by and for communal governments.[1] Three types of authority — communal, lordly and pontifical — could be exercised simultaneously in the same city at this time, and very often these groups did not so much compete with each other as work together in a hierarchical, complementary, and subsidiary manner. Each had created a specific form of urban government that, as time went by, fostered intertwined legitimacies, with each using technical and rhetorical instruments borrowed from the others. These governments had interests in the public palaces that they invested in in their own way. Both seigniorial and pontifical regimes sought to use the old places of communal power to their advantage not only because these places were large but also because if they were successful, it meant they had secured the consent of the people, necessary for the legitimacy of all rulers.

I take a thematic rather than chronological approach, showing in the first section how the *signorie* built their residences near public palaces to establish political links with the commune in the name of a shared heritage, examining in the second aspects of the relationships representatives of the pontifical power maintained with urban public palaces, and addressing in the third the use and upkeep of these palaces under the seigniorial regimes.

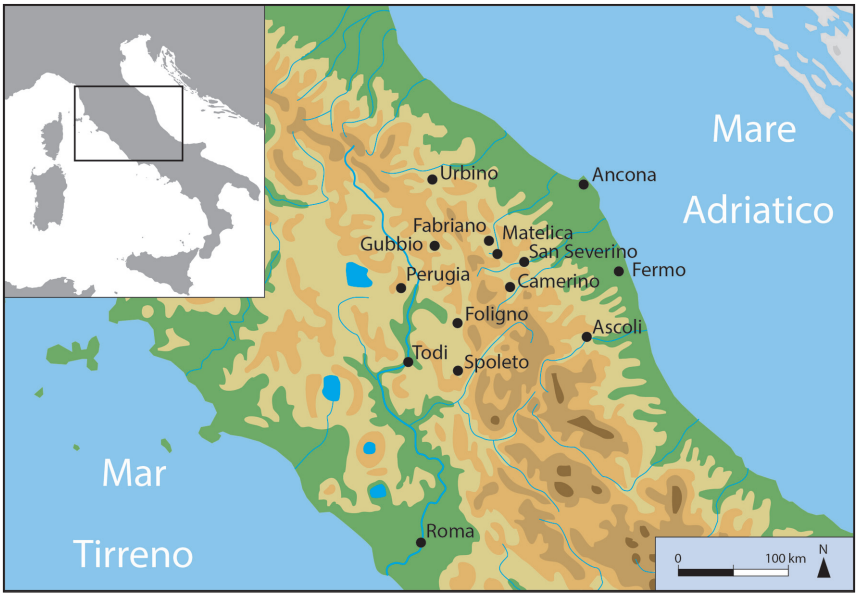

Figure 1: The cities of the March of Ancona and the Duchy of Spoleto discussed in this article. Map designed by Élisa Nicoud.

Lords in Their Residences: A Sought-After Proximity to the Commune and Its Palaces

Many seigniorial families chose to establish themselves in the heart of the city, the main piazza, at the very moment they were building up their dominance. In Fabriano, by the beginning of the Trecento at the latest, the Chiavelli had settled in the direct vicinity of the great communal buildings (Delzant 2018: 264–265). Their *domus* were located in close proximity to the two most important churches in town, but also to the most spectacular achievements of the *comune*, the palace of the *podestate*, the great fountain, and the palace of the priors (**Figure 2**). The Chiavelli were thus part of the long process that saw the *platea comunis* agglomerate the main political and religious monuments of the community. The same movement consisting in the inscription of the dominant family within the urban space can be observed in Urbino with the residences of Antonio da Montefeltro (Giannatiempo López 2004), or in Foligno with those of the Trinci (Lametti 1989; Lametti 2001; Delzant 2018: 265–266). The Trinci's securing of the pontifical vicariate *in temporalibus* and therefore the recognition by a higher authority of the family's domination in the last third of the Trecento coincided with its settlement in the epicenter of the city (**Figure 3**). At the turn of the century, Ugolino III Trinci, lord of the city and head of the family group, acquired a group of houses which he restructured and then added to forming a new complex. By 1410, this set of buildings which was situated perpendicular to the cathedral and the communal complex, filled by itself one side of the city's *piazza vecchia* (**Figures 4** and **11**). Until its fall in 1439, the family used it as its main urban residence.

Figure 2: The Palazzo del Podestà, the Sturinalto fountain, and, on the right, the Palazzo del Comune in Fabriano, which was built on the site of the former Chiavelli residence and now houses the Teatro Gentile da Fabriano. Wikimedia.

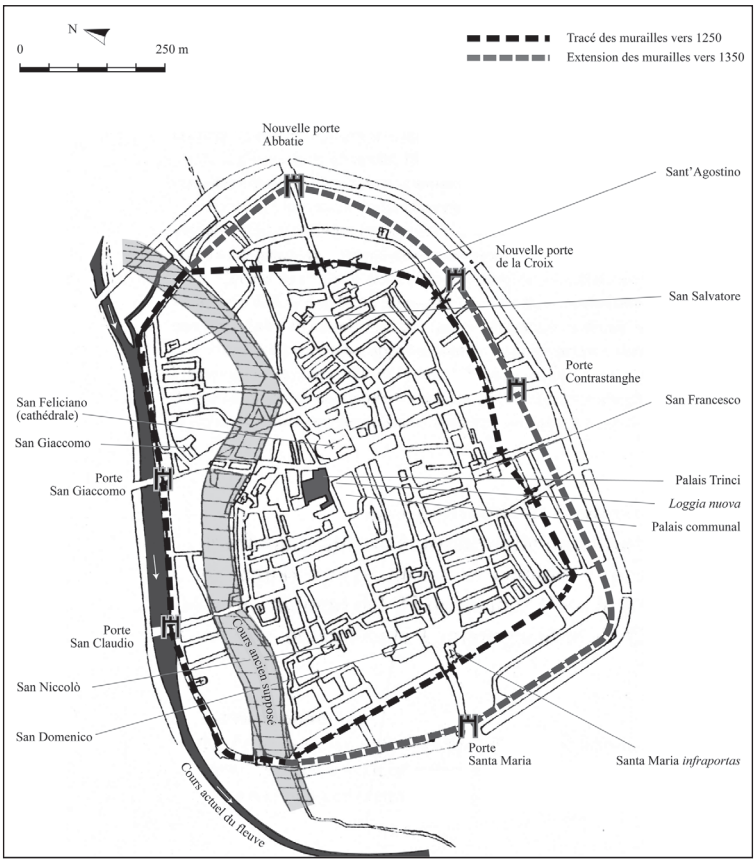

Figure 3: Foligno at the end of the Middle Ages. Map by Élisa Nicoud, after Schubring 1993.

Figure 4: The complex of communal palaces making up the Piazza della Repubblica in Foligno and on the right Palazzo Trinci (façade built in the 19th century). Wikimedia.

In the often polycentric context of medieval Italian cities, several complementary centers contributed to civic cohesion, to a collective identity that the regime of the popular commune sought or claimed to embody. Camerino at the end of the Middle Ages was structured around two main centers (**Figure 5**). In the first one several different spaces were juxtaposed: the assembly square that housed both the palaces of the captain of the *Popolo* and the captain of the commune, and the *piazza* Sant'Angelo, where the eponymous Benedictine church and the *trasanna*, the bench of the communal justice, were located. The second nucleus was made up of the *ecclesia matrix*, Santa Maria Maggiore and its large square, which, according to the urban *statuti* written in the Quattrocento, was one of the four 'plate[ae] comunis' of Camerino (ms. 312, Statuta et ordinamenta viarium, f. 20r–v, BCVCam; Ciapparoni 1977).[2] The da Varano family steadily extended its spatial hold on the city from this second center (Delzant 2018: 274–276). By the end of the 15th century, their residences constituted a huge complex stretching over an entire side of the piazza and beyond (**Figure 6**).

These few cases call for two remarks. Firstly, by implanting its residences in spaces constitutive of civic identity, the seigneurial family proclaimed that it fully belonged to the community and shared the community's history and values but, at the same time, it profoundly modified the layout of such *loca* of civic identity, shifting the center of gravity, both spatial and political, towards the lord who represented himself as continuing the great urban projects undertaken by the commune. The lord strove to stand in the halo of consensus and legitimacy that emanated from the public palaces, where collective destiny was built daily and where the political community displayed an

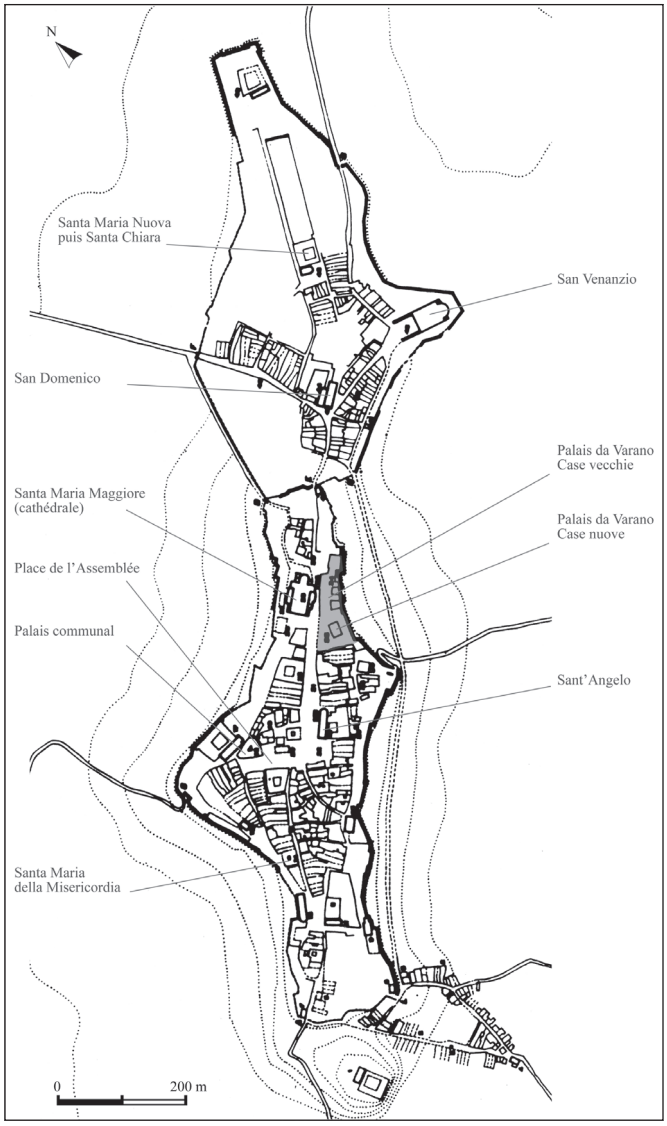

Figure 5: Camerino at the end of the Middle Ages. Map by Élisa Nicoud, after Raponi 1977.

imagined concord. When he succeeded in bringing Perugia under his control, Braccio da Montone took up residence in the palace of the *podestate*, and in 1416 he made the magistrates of the commune grant him the *signoria* over the city in the very palace of the priors (Nico and Regni 1997: 144) (**Figure 7**). In 1423 in this same palace, in the presence of members of the lordly families of Camerino, Fabriano, and Foligno, Braccio received the crown of prince of Capua sent to him by Queen Joan II of Naples (Campano 1929: 191; Scalvanti 1905: 601). The event was described by many local chroniclers, including Antonio dei Veghi, who wrote in his *diario* that 'il signore Corrado signore di Foligno l'incoronò [i.e. Braccio] di un cerchio di oro nella prima sala del palazzo' (Fabretti 1888: 3).

Figure 6: Tommaso Salmon, *Veduta della piazza principale di Camerino*, in Salmon 1757.

Figure 7: Palazzo dei Priori (main building in the middle) and the *curia archiepiscopal*, built on the site of the former *palatium comunis* in Perugia. Wikimedia.

The lords merely situated their residences near the public palaces and thereby demonstrated their connection to communal institutions on which they depended. They altered the way the councils and assemblies operated but they still needed the legitimacy that these institutions conferred on them and still relied on the administrative apparatus these institutions made available to them. For a long period, the *signoria* was embedded in the commune, that is to say, assumed the institutionalized form of a political body irreducible to its leader (Delzant 2016: 177–179). The insertion of the lord within the communal system clearly appeared when a

signore's house became one of the many seats of the communal regime. In Camerino as in Foligno, almost all of the registers of *reformationes* of the commune produced during the period of the *signoria* are now lost: the two surviving books, however, in which the deliberations of various councils were compiled, reveal that these meetings were regularly held in the *domus* of the lord, when they were chaired by the lord himself.[3] On 15 January 1427, the 'consilio secreto civitatis fulginei' thus took place 'in camera liliorum domorum magnifici domini nostri Corradi de Trinciis vexilliferi justitie populi civitatis Fulginei' (Rif., 24, f. 119r, ACFol).

The second remark tackles the modalities of the insertion of the houses the lords built within the urban fabric. Their *domus* in town centers were not fortresses. As Marco Folin (2015: 28–31) has pointed out, urban fortresses were used neither as main residence by the lords nor as the seats of their government — with the notable exception of Mantova — until the beginning of the 15th century. Moreover, these *domus* were not military buildings (Folin 2010: 352–358). They integrated defensive elements like tower houses that were characteristic of the noble residences of the time, but they remained largely open. They expressed the lord's refusal to enclose himself, announcing that he fully belonged to the city.

Fermo is perhaps a particular case when it comes to this model for the occupation of urban space, even though its layout is similar in many respects to cities such as Piacenza and Parma, whose main *piazze* were closed off and fortified by the Visconti when these towns fell under their domination. In the second half of the 14th century, the palace of the *commune* of Fermo, the bishop's palace, the *rocca*, and numerous houses made up a vast complex, called the Girfalco, surrounded by walls. On 13 August 1396, the 'reformatore generale della provintia della Marcha de Ancona', the archbishop of Zara Pietro Matafoni, implemented an important agreement intended to ensure, at least for a time, the position of Pope Boniface IX in the province (**Figure 8**). The powerful warlords Conte da Carrara and Mostarda da Strada met in the 'camera del dicto Messer lo Reformatore' with Pietro Matafoni himself and those who were to pay them the considerable sum of 11,000 gold ducats to settle the year-long *condotta* they had entered into with the rector of the March. The payers were none other than the lords of Camerino, who had designated the lord of Foligno, Ugolino III Trinci, to serve as 'mediator' (Feudi e Comunità, reg. 19, codice varanesco, 280v–281r, ASPa). Ludovico Migliorati — the pontifical vicar and lord of the city from 1405 to 1428 — also set up his residence in the Girfalco, not far from the *priori*'s own palace, where in 1418 he had arranged sumptuous festivities to celebrate his wedding. His plans were spoiled by the fire which, according to the notary and registrar of the city Antonio di Nicolò, burned to ashes the magnificent gifts from his fellow citizens along with a large part of his *domus* where rich fabrics had been unfortunately stored near numerous candles (De

Minicis 1870: 47).[4] Antonio notes that Alessandro Sforza also took up residence in the Girfalco when he exercised his own lordship over the city and undertook large works in the fortified complex (De Minicis 1870: 75).[5] The Girfalco was, however, in the words of Francesco Pirani (2010: 70–72; 129–133), more a threatening urban fortress than a public civic space.

Figure 8: Unknown local painter, *Antiqua monimenta in Monte Girofalci vulgo Girone*, 18th century, oil on canvas. Pinacoteca Civica, Fermo.

In the middle of the 15th century, with his *De re aedificatoria*, Leon Battista Alberti provides a clear theoretical expression to a discourse that architectural and urbanistic practices had proclaimed long before him. He takes up the ancient distinction between the legitimate government of the prince and the usurped power of the tyrant, contrasting (book V, chap. 3) the tyrant and his fortress (*arx*), with the prince and his house, (*domus*, *aedes*, or *regia*), that is to say, a residence located in the center of the city and accessible to all (1966: vol. 1: 346–347).

Which Palazzi to House the Pope, His Representatives, and His Governors?

The very troubled political history of the early 15th century makes it difficult to identify exactly when (in an often discontinuous and intermittent way), and in what way the papal power used urban public palaces. In a second moment of this analysis, I would like to raise some questions on such an historiographical field. The pontifical administration could assume direct control of cities and towns (*terrae* or *castra*) and send its representatives there, or could assume indirect control and appoint an

individual or collective representative from among inhabitants (Partner 1972; Carocci 1996; Carocci 2012). Whether it took the first or second approach in a given city depended on the bilateral negotiations between the pontiff, on the one hand, and the communities — and their rulers — of the Papal State, on the other, while whichever approach it adopted had different outcomes from one city to the next. Under the pontificate of Boniface IX (1389–1404), the vicariate *in temporalibus* was granted extensively (Jamme 2011: 67–68; on the vicariate, see Delzant 2020b: 28–33) and did not benefit the lordly families only.

Many a commune negotiated with the papacy to obtain a collective vicariate for different lengths of time. They bargained with the Church or to one of the obediences during the Great Schism (1378–1417), when at first two and then three rival popes were reduced to granting broad privileges to cities whose support they desperately sought to secure. The communes thus managed to preserve a significant amount of autonomy and a real freedom of choice in the governing practices they exercised in the name of both the *popolo* and the pope. Such was the case for Bologna, Perugia, Ascoli, and Fermo, all of which were granted one or more vicariates in the last quarter of the 14th century (Esch 1969: 602–603, 605; Jamme 2011: 67–70). The obtaining of a pontifical vicariate also spared cities the high costs of hosting a permanent representative of the papacy, along with his *familia*, his *curia*, and his administration. During the decade (1404–1414) in which King Ladislao d'Angiò Durazzo undertook multiple political and military interventions in the center of the peninsula, in the Papal State in particular, he tried to seize control of many towns and their territories. He used the same type of political instruments as those developed, tried and tested by his papal rival, that is to say, representatives invested with broad powers, and many a city was forced to host his vicariate or even his vice-king (Cutolo 1969 [1936]). Under the pontificate of Martin V (1417–1431), however, a significantly larger number of urban communities came under the direct administration of the Church. The communal institutions were maintained and their palaces were preserved even if the scope of their prerogatives shrunk.

The current state of our knowledge does not allow me to draw up a picture of the choices the pope's representatives made in setting up their residences and housing their administrations in central Italy. To figure that out, we would need to establish detailed chronologies regarding the presence of these papal representatives (often endowed with the title of governor) in the various cities or *terrae* of the pontifical provinces, but we do not have the tools yet for undertaking such an endeavor, and it is not certain that archives and chronicles allow for such a comparative study. Getting a fuller picture of the nature of the papacy's residences also requires taking into consideration urban fortresses or fortified districts — such as the Rocca del Sole in Perugia, in which a palace for the pope was embedded (Jamme 2003: 401; 408) and complexes like the

Girfalco in Fermo — on which the papal representatives tried, with varying degrees of success, to rely (**Figure 8**), since the towns which possessed a *rocca* could not be governed without this fortress being firmly held. Due to lack of space, I cannot address this topic in detail here, but I can note that occasional mentions in narrative sources suggest that the pope's governors could choose to live in the communal palaces. In certain cases, this choice was clearly punitive and vexatious, although such occupations were only temporary since the papacy relied on the urban communities themselves to administer their State. In 1367, Todi was punished by the pope and lost much of its autonomy: it was then compelled to host a papal governor who resided in the palace where the priors of the town used to live (**Figure 9**). He stayed there long enough to endow the building with an imposing campanile, but the communal government returned to its palace a few years later (Ceci and Bartolini 1979: 28–29). This episode brings to light important problems of method: the non-continuity in the occupations of architectural complexes, the variations in the functions attributed to rooms and internal space, and the evolution of the interior layout of the buildings often escape us. Moreover, more than one power could occupy the same *palazzo* at the same moment, and particularly in a complex whose architectural structure very often aggregated several preexisting palaces, towers, and houses together. Sketching a regional overview based on a comparison of the situations in several cities is even more difficult, given the heterogeneity that often characterizes the documentary evidence and the state of research for each of these cities.

Figure 9: The Palazzo dei Priori in Todi in the middle and the Palazzo del Capitano and Palazzo del Popolo on the left. Wikimedia.

What is certain is that the maintenance and uses of the communal palaces became the subjects of extensive negotiations between the representatives of the pontifical power and the communal authorities when a city reaffirmed its fidelity to the pontiff whether because it wanted to or because it felt compelled to. In Perugia, the *palazzo dei priori* was one of the key elements of a strong civic identity that was based on the ideal of political autonomy, an autonomy that could be truly exercised or simply displayed (**Figure 7**). When Pope Boniface IX was called to Perugia in 1392, in the middle of the Great Schism, to pacify a quasi-civil war, he took up residence in the heart of this imposing complex (Nico and Regni 1997: 141). In 1408, the Umbrian city chose to offer itself spontaneously — or so it said — to King Ladislao d'Angiò Durazzo as a means of safeguarding. The public instrument that conveyed the decision to the King specified that the palace of the priors would be his residence during his stays in town (Cutolo 1969 [1936]: 338), thus strongly signaling their acceptance of the monarch's authority, even though the priors had specified when they surrendered to the Duke of Milano in 1400 that they would keep their residence in the palace 'commo è al presente'. The holders of sovereign power were very rarely physically present in town, and indeed, Ladislao's representative, his viceroy, did not end up inhabiting the *palazzo dei priori* but rather the neighboring palace of the *podestate*. In 1424, after the death of Braccio da Montone, Perugia had to recognize the dominion of the pope over the city, but the priors kept their palace and the papal legate moved once again into the palace of the *podestate*, which Braccio had also previously made his home. Throughout the 15th century, although the priors' scope of action was limited by numerous direct interventions by the legate or the governor, the complex of the public palaces continued to be expanded. A new phase of enlargement took place between 1429 and 1433 with the integration of new houses purchased by the commune, while the *cappella nuova* was built between 1450 and 1454 (Nico and Regni 1997: 142–145; 148).

After the fall of the Trinci family in 1439, its residence in Foligno continued to carry out the public functions it had previously carried out, becoming the 'palatium domini gubernatoris', the palace of the pontifical governor who oversaw the government of the city, and hosting the communal councils and the meetings of the priors in the same rooms they had met in under the presidency of the late lords. A register of the *riformazioni* passed during the years 1444–1447 highlights that it was customary for the 'concilium generalis comunis et hominum civitatis Fulginei' to gather in the former houses of the *signori*, for example, 'in sala imperatorum palatii magnifici domini gubernatoris' (**Figure 10**). On 1 March 1447, newly elected priors took the oath of office 'in sala del fa curie domini gubernatoris'.[6] As a matter of fact, the priors temporarily left the palace of the commune and moved into the pontifical governor's

palace (Lametti 1989: 333). It should be noted that, even during the *signoria* period, the term 'palatium' seems to have been almost exclusively reserved by the scribes of Foligno for the buildings housing the magistrates and the councils of the commune and those where the bishop and the canons of the cathedral lived. The seigniorial residences, on the other hand, are referred to in the notarial documentation, and first of all the one produced by the commune, only as houses (*case* or *domus*).[7] The pontifical governor can thus be seen as transforming the *domus* into a real public palace at the beginning of the 1440s. The buildings acquired a palatial dignity, independent of their size or their architectural beauty, because the governor, the representative of the pope himself, made them his residence and because the Camera Apostolica became their legitimate owner (Lametti 2001: 89–90; Delzant 2018: 271–273). Only from this moment on, could they be considered as the siege for a supreme authority.

Figure 10: Palazzo Trinci, hall of the *imperatores*, Foligno. Wikimedia.

The Camera Apostolica nevertheless rented out part of them to private individuals, a practice which was not unusual in Italy at the time, as it was a way for wealthy individuals and public authorities living in huge complexes to maintain useful client relationships and to make these buildings profitable, or at least to contribute to their costly upkeep. This practice was taken into account in the very construction of large houses and palaces, whose first level often included rooms intended for commercial rental that faced the street and had large openings. In 1430, for example, the Trinci

had contracts with tenants for stores or commercial warehouses (*apotecae*, *fundici*) in their *domus* (Lametti 1989: 384 [docs. 118, 120]). When these buildings became a papal palace, the new government continued this tried and tested policy that had been profitable in all respects. In the 1440s, the Camera Apostolica also had tenants who carried out their commercial activities in stores located at the junction of the street of the merchants and Foligno's main square, the already mentioned *piazza vecchia*, like the Florentine merchant Nerio Cavalcanti. ('Nerius de Cavalcantibus de Florentia, habitator civitatis Fulginei, habet ad pensionem apotecas duas sive fundicum in capite strate mercatorum et iuxta portam introytus domorum sive palatii dicte camere' [Lametti 1989: 386 (doc. 128, 15 March 1442)]). Through their social connections, others were able to rent a whole part of the palace where they could also live and be in close proximity to where the main decisions concerning the life of the city were made.[8] The economic or political interests of the local elite did not, however, necessarily line up with the financial needs of the Camera Apostolica. In 1457, due to the 'necessitates' of the time, Calixtus III (1455–1458) ordered his treasurer in the province of Perugia, Berengario Chiavelli, to put up Corrado Trinci's 'domus veteris' up for sale, indicating that the building was not perceived by the papacy as a necessary tool for the proper administration of the city. But no serious buyer seems to have come forward. Barely a year and a half later, Pio II (1458–1464) find himself having to allocate 'extraordinarie' 200 gold florins from the Camera Apostolica for the repairs of the palace where his governor resided, who claimed that the *palatium* had been rendered uninhabitable in places 'as much by its vetustate as by the negligence of his own predecessors' ('tum vetustate tum negligentia superiorum') (Lametti 1989: 388–389 [docs. 136–137]).

The pontiff's representatives thus made use of a wide range of options available for occupying places of urban power. From taking up temporary residence in the main palace of the commune to negotiating a move to all or part of a lesser building, to taking over the residence of a former ruling family, they adapted to the specific local contexts of the towns they had to co-administer in order to avoid any strong opposition. They chose to spare the communal government and the place where it exercised its power, helping to maintain these places and avoiding making their presence felt.

Uses and Upkeeping of the Communal Palaces during the Signoria: A Few Examples of a Widespread Experience

As I have noted, at that time, these buildings still housed the organs of the commune, where assemblies and councils deliberated. Whatever the subject, whether it was current administration, taxation, or foreign policy, the *dominus*, who often himself either directly presided over their meetings or indirectly presided through his *vicarius*, had a

real effect on the direction of these debates, and he also had devoted supporters among the members of these councils and assemblies on whom he could rely. But despite the power the lord wielded, the decisions taken in the *palazzo del comune*, especially when they engaged the fate of the city through war and peace, were charged with a solemnity and a legitimacy that the *signoria* relied on, a legitimacy accumulated in the building in the course of time by the long construction and the always repeated manifestation of a unified civic community.

An example of the crucial role these communal buildings continued to play even after the lords assumed control over towns can be seen in the way a war that broke out in 1389 in the March of Ancona in which the interests of various towns and of the lordly families who dominated were mixed took an end (Delzant 2022). To put a stop to the hostilities between the Smeducci of San Severino supported by the military forces of their commune and allied with the Ottoni, lords of Matelica, and the Chiavelli, lords of Fabriano, who had joined forces against the da Varano, who mobilized the communal troops of their own town, the cities of San Severino, Matelica, and Fabriano appointed procurators to negotiate with Gentile da Varano, his son Rodolfo, and the city of Camerino. In each one of these three towns placed under the rule of a lordly family, the emissaries were designated and given their orders in or near the communal palaces, first by the communal authorities and then by the *signori*. In San Severino, on 14 May, it was 'in sala maiori palatii … comunis' that ser Giacomo di Paolo di Giovanni de Sancto Justo was made *sindicus* and *procurator* of the commune. Ten days later, he was invested with the same functions outside, 'ante domos comunis', by the lords of the *terra*, the brothers Onofrio and Roberto Smeducci (Feudi e Comunità, reg. 19, codice varanesco, ff. 267v–268r; 271v, ASPa). Both Fabriano and Matelica chose Coluccio Bartolutti da Matelica to be their envoy.[9] On 22 May, he was named syndic 'in sala maiori palatii comunis Fabriani' by the 'consilium maior comunis et hominum terre Fabriani' and then by the 'magnificus et potens miles dominus Guido domini Alberghetti de Clavellis de Fabriano'. He was appointed to 'ad faciendum, tractandum et celebrandum bonam et perfectam ac pertuam pacem vice et nomine ispius cum magnificis et egregiis dominis domino Gentile domini Berardi milite, et Rodulfo eius filio de civitate Camerini provincie Marchie Anconitane, ac etiam cum comune seu eius sindico eiusdem civitatis' (ff. 268v–269v). Coluccio was invested with the same functions under the same conditions in Matelica the following day. Again, the ceremony took place 'in palatio comunis', 'in sala maiori ipsius palatii'. The members of the major council of the commune and of the men of the 'terra Mathelicae' intervened first, followed by the young lord Guido di Francesco Ottoni (ff. 270r–271r).

On 28 May, a peace was finally concluded in Camerino between the da Varano and the Smeducci and the commune of San Severino represented by its procurator ser Giacomo. Among all the witnesses called by for the occasion was Coluccio Bartolutti. Ser Marino Neruti, the chancellor of the commune of Camerino and ser Giovanni Putti, its procurator, also played an important role during this event. Even though this meeting took place in the gardens of the main residence of Gentile da Varano in town (ff. 272r–272v), the episode as a whole shows how critical public palaces were to the functioning of urban *signorie* at the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries, a fact that often is overlooked. The complementarity or even subsidiary nature of the relationship between public palaces and seigneurial *domus* is clear. The lords' residences did not replace the public palaces as the place of politics. They were linked, at times even materially grafted to one another by bridges above the streets or doorways, as in Foligno (**Figures 4** and **11**). A wide range of places was thus available to the lord for attending to his interests, places where he could play his roles and mix the notes of domination and consultation.

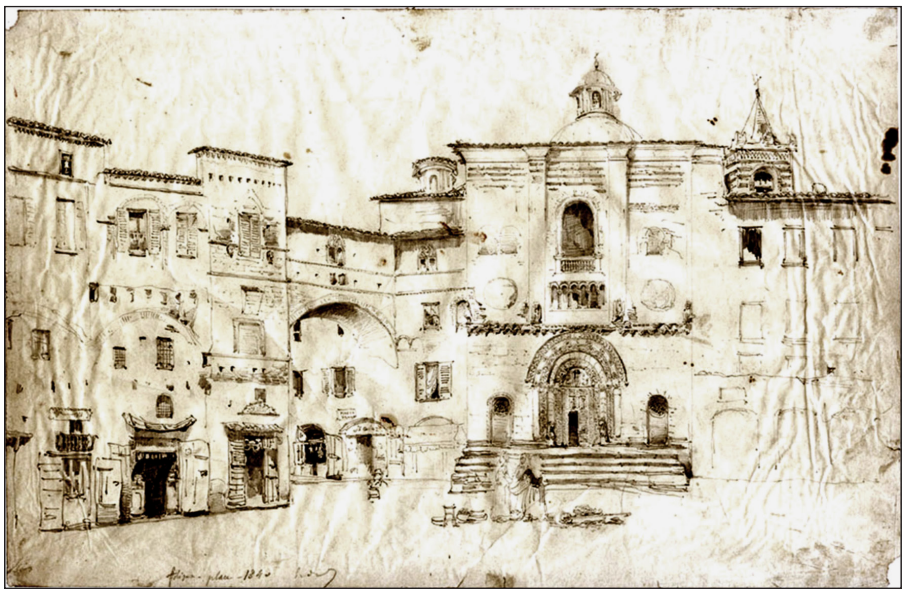

Figure 11: Edmond Du Sommerard, *Foligno – Place*, 1840, pencil on paper, 25.7 × 40.5 cm. Museo della Città di Palazzo Trinci, Foligno. A covered passageway similar to the one linking the lordly houses to the cathedral (center) used to link the domus to the neighboring communal palace.

Ancient and imposing, built in their day at enormous cost, regularly enlarged and modified, the palaces of the commune required onerous expenditure.[10] It is not surprising, following on from what had just been said, that in the wake of seigniorial domination, the towns' new masters tended to maintain the level of public spending in this area and even contributed directly to keeping these buildings in good condition.

As shown by many recent monographic studies — dedicated, for example, to Foligno (Bettoni 2014), Perugia (Mancini 1997) or Gubbio (Belardi 2001; Luongo 2016: 49–65) — and, as highlighted by the collective research currently being coordinated by Marco Folin and Elena Svalduz, public palaces were not buildings completed in a designated period according to initial architectural plans but were rather often under construction for centuries and periodically renovated, restructured, or enlarged and linked with nearby buildings bought or raised by the commune so as to extend the complex of communal power or, more generally, to develop the complex that afforded political legitimacy to those in power.

Such works, however, offered the *dominus* an opportunity to intervene and contribute visibly to the communal affairs, allowing him to appear in line with the values of magnificence and *liberalitas* which contributed to the shaping of the figure of the good ruler during the late Middle Ages (Green 1990). Foligno again provides an example. According to archaeological data, several buildings linked to the oldest nucleus of the communal complex were raised at the end of the 14th and beginning of the 15th century (Piermarini 2014: 149), that is to say, during the very period in which the Trinci family's power was growing. At that time, during the first decade of the Quattrocento, Ugolino III had the new family residences built. But in 1426, part of the palace of the commune was threatened with collapse.[11] The general supervisory council ('publicum et generale consilium credentie') of Foligno met 'in palatio comunis' on 8 September to decide on the repairs to be made (Rif., 24, ff. 94r–96v, ACFol). During the deliberation, Francesco Bartoloni, a devoted councilor, stated that 'since the palace would make visible, clearly and obviously, the honor and the status of [their] magnificent lord Corrado Trinci and of the commune of Foligno' ('cum hoc palatium sit honor et status magnifici domini nostri Corradi de Trinciis et communis de Fulginei ad bene et clare videndum'), it was necessary to call on skilled master craftsmen capable of building a lasting and honorable work. As for the practical details, he 'would rely on the said magnificent Corrado Trinci and trust his foresight, since [Corrado] was familiar with this type of work and knew these matters well' ('remisit in providentia dicti magnifici [Corradi de Trinciis] qui intelligit et cognoscit talia laboreria') (Rif., 24, f. 95v). Lorenzo di Pietro Nutilli, another councilor, added later on that their lord 'knew well the problems of construction and their costs and that he had good master craftsmen in his service' ('dominus noster Corradus bene se intelligat de hedificiis et sumptibus edificiorum et habet secum magistros peritos') (Rif., 24, f. 96r).

The solution the council decided on required that several walls be dismantled, that changes be made to flights of stairs, that new pillars and vaults be constructed, and that a large part of the great hall be rebuilt. The expenses were nevertheless controlled. The

contract concluded on 11 September 1426 with the master masons and carpenters who were picked for the job required them to place windows in one of the walls they would build, 'two or three of which will be taken from the wall that is to face the square' ('dui o tre, de quelle se levaranno de la parete che se deve scarcare verso piazza' [Rif., 24, ff. 97r–98v]).[12] The reuse of such materials certainly reduced cost, but it also limited the changes in the aspect of the palace. This reinforced the image of stability of the institutions housed there, thanks to the continuity maintained in the urban fabric where the lord had settled.

In his own name, Corrado Trinci had the sum of 45 gold florins paid to the contractors on 14 September 1426, when the work began ('Per manus Nalli de Segio civis Fulginatis de pecunia supradicti magnifici domini Corradi, ante domum mey Benedicti dedit, solvit et consignavit supradictis magistris pro prima solutione supradicti coptimi florenos auri quatragintaquinque', says the book of *Riformanze* [f. 98v]). This was exactly half the amount promised in cash by both the commune and the *dominus* at this stage, who had also promised to provide construction materials.[13] In doing so, Corrado took on the renovation of the communal palace, where the first magistrates of the *Popolo* had lived, in equal measure with the priors themselves. By his attention to the seat of collective power, he showed respect for a commune that his hegemony over the city had nevertheless undermined.

Conclusion

Seigneurial regimes positioned themselves both spatially and ideologically in the continuity of the commune. The *signorie* chose building sites for their own residences that were near public palaces or, in the case of Camerino, near the cathedral and alongside one the main communal places, as that allowed them to insert themselves into the communal achievements and identity on which they depended. Their *domus* made it possible for them to present themselves as the protectors of a civic identity that the commune had established.

At this stage of my research, my survey only allows me to sketch the attitude of the pontifical power towards the communal palaces: the legates and governors sent to central Italy understood what these palaces represented for communities that were subject to control and yet not crushed. Constantly under construction, constantly refurbished and restructured, these buildings were shared between different authorities and powers that had to coexist. They share an essential characteristic with the civic identity they help to build: seemingly unchanging, they were subject to constant redefinition.

Notes

[1] For a detailed analysis of the political situation, and the corresponding bibliography, see Maire Vigueur 1987 and Pirani 2014a.

[2] See, for example, book 3, rubric 55 or rubric 62 of the 1424 *Statuta comunis et populi* (Ciapparoni 1977: 204–205, 210): measures against those who commit 'crime against nature' ('contra naturam', i.e. the 'vitium sodomiticum'), and the 'young dissolutes' ('iuvenes dissoluti') were issued every month by the officers of the commune 'in platea Sancti Angeli and Sancte Marie Maioris'. The *Statuta et ordinamenta viarum, fontium et pontium civitatis Camerini et totius sui comitatus* are known from a late 15th-century copy made by a local notary, Pier Marino Leonardi. The text survives in a manuscript held in the Biblioteca Valentiniana of Camerino (ms. 312). Rubric 18 (f. 20r–v) mentions the 'plate[ae] comunis videlicet plateam sancti angeli et plateam rasenghe plateam sante marie maioris et sancti dominici'.

[3] The book that survives for Camerino pertains to 1404 (Ducato di Urbino, Classe I, n. 13, inserto 3, 144 f., ASFi), while the one for Foligno covers the years 1425 to 1433: Rif., 24, 220 f., ACFol).

[4] According to Antonio, 'Fuerunt facte magne nuptie et magna apparata; et die VII, fuit facta magna jostra in Girone', but the next day, a violent fire broke out in the palace, 'in quadam stantia prope cortile in palatio domini, ubi erant quatuor centum libre confectionum et sexcentum libre cereo rum; et omnia combusta fuerunt, et alibi omni mantilia, tabula, baccilia de ottone et plattelli de stagno mutuati per cives combuserunt'. The 19th-century edition of Antonio di Nicolò's *Cronaca della città di Fermo* has been revised and translated by Paolo Petruzzi in 2008.

[5] Referring Alessandro Sforza's interventions, Antonio explains that 'dicto anno [1442] et mense, esque et per totum mensem junii, fuit factum in Girifalco Firmano maximum laborerium'. On Fermo and the Sforza family, see Pirani 2014b.

[6] Lametti 1989: 387 refers to Arch. Priorale, Rif., 27, ff. 5r (1 January 1444), 11r (23 February 1444), 250r (26 December 1446), and 267v (1 March 1447), ACFol.

[7] The same lexical choice can be observed in Ferrera during the ruling of the Este family in 15th century. The houses of the lords were referred to as palaces by the lordly chancellery, while the local chroniclers referred to them only as buildings or houses (Folin 2010: 348–349), clearly indicating the civic community's reluctance to recognize the full legitimacy and authority of a seigniorial domination, since the term 'palatium' had long been reserved for places associated with a supreme sovereign power. It was not applied to communal buildings until the last two decades of the 12th century (Maire Vigueur 2008: 210).

[8] Lametti 1989: 388 (docs. 134–135): the Camera Apostolica collected rents from Angelus Iacobi Stiçe de Fulgineo, who 'habuit ad pensionem a probo viro Paulo de Castello vice executore ser Tomassi sui fratris carnalis, executoris et cammerarii civitatis Fulginei, quandam partem domorum veterem olim m. d. de Trinciis et nunc dicte Cammere, videlicet versus stantiam leonum' (24 August 1449) and from Felicet Macteutii 'de societate franciscorum' who 'habet ad pensionem quoddam plancatum positum in domibus olim Trinciorum, habitationis et residentie reverendissimi d. gubernatoris, iuxta sua latera' (24 February 1450).

[9] Coluccio Bartolutti was nicknamed 'Acinello' ('Little Grape'). Although his fellow citizens once laughed at him, their opinion of him seems to have changed enough for them to entrust him with an important diplomatic mission.

[10] In most cases, it is not possible to assess the overall cost of these huge buildings nor the total expenses incurred in carrying out the necessary and frequent works, although public accounts such as those of Fabriano for the year 1381 give us a sense of these expenditures the municipality tried to control (Delzant 2012: 321–322).

[11] See Delzant 2012: 322–325 and Delzant 2020a: 124–125. Bettoni and Tedeschi 2014: 90–93 mention the communal deliberations and the contracts signed for the reconstruction and also reproduce relevant documents in appendixes 1–3 (132–135).

[12] The following paragraph of the contract mentions the reuse of materials: 'Item promectono et convengono li dicti magistri … a li dicti magnifico signor Corrado et signori priori … de alzare et murare in quella grosseza che è la sua summitate lu muro novo del dicto palazo, lu quale sta verso lo chiostro de la fonte del dicto palazo … et in esso muro mecterando le finestre, dui o tre, de quelle se levaranno de la parete che se deve scarcare verso piazza.'

[13] The other half of the payment in cash was to be paid 'ad mezzo de l'opera desso lavorio'.

Acknowledgments

I have been carrying out for several years research on the governance of public space and the creation of urban fabric and its public buildings by urban seigniorial regimes in central Italy. I first presented parts of this article at a colloquium organised in 2016 in Bergamo by S. Balossino and R. Rao and then in my 2020 article 'La construction des palais communaux, entre diffusions des modèles et interprétations locales'. Drawing on important recent archival discoveries, here I synthesize and update my earlier ideas, inserting them into the global framework suggested by M. Folin and E. Svalduz — whom I warmly thank — during two meetings they organized in 2022. I also warmly thank M.J. Devaney, A. Jamme, C. Monjou and P. Vuillemin for their help in the preparation of this article.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

References

Archival Sources

ACFol : Archivio storico Comunale di Foligno (presso l'Archivio di Stato di Perugia, sezione di Foligno), Archivio Priorale, Riformanze, 24, 220 fol.

ASFi : Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Ducato di Urbino, Classe I, n. 13, inserto 3, 144 fol.

ASPa : Archivio di Stato di Parma, *Feudi e Comunità*, reg. 19 (codice varanesco), 359 fol.

BCVCam : Biblioteca comunale Valentiniana di Camerino, ms. 312: *Statuta et ordinamenta viarum, fontium et pontium civitatis Camerini et totius sui comitatus*, 40 fol.

Published Sources

Alberti, LB. 1966. *L'architettura (De re aedificatoria)*. Ed. by G Orlandi. 2 vol. Milan: Il Polifilo.

Campano, GA. 1929. *Braccii Perusini vita et gesta ab anno MCCCLXVIII usque ad MCCCCXXIV*. Ed. by R Valentini. Bologna: Zanichelli.

Ciapparoni, F (ed.). 1977. *Statuta comunis et populi civitatis Camerini (1424)*. Naples: Jovene.

De Minicis, G (ed.). 1870. *Cronache della città di Fermo: Documenti di storia italiana pubblicati a cura della R. Deputazione sugli studi di storia patria per le provincie di Toscana, dell'Umbria e della Marche*. Vol. 4. Florence: Cellini.

di Nicolò, A. 2008. *Cronaca della città di Fermo*. Ed. by G De Minicis. Rev. and trans. by P Petruzzi. Fermo: Andrea Livi.

Fabretti, A (ed.). 1888. *Cronache della città di Perugia*. Vol. 2. Torino: Tipi privati dell'Editore.

Salmon, T. 1757. *Lo stato presente di tutti i paesi e popoli del mondo naturale, politico, e morale, con nouve osservazioni e correozioni degli antichi e moderni viaggiatori*. Vol. 21. Venice: Giambatista Albrizzi.

Scalvanti, O. 1905. Frammenti di cronaca perugina inedita. *Bollettino della Regia Deputazione di Storia Patria per l'Umbria*, 11 (1–2): 573–609.

Studies

Belardi, M. 2001. *Il Palazzo dei Consoli a Gubbio e il centro urbano trecentesco*. Perugia: Quattroemme.

Bettoni, F. 2014. *I palazzi pubblici di Foligno*. Perugia: Quattroemme.

Carocci, S. 1996. Governo papale e città nello Stato della Chiesa: Ricerche sul Quattrocento. In: Gensini S (ed.), *Principi e città alla fine del Medioevo*, 151–224. Ospedaletto (Pisa): Pacini.

Carocci, S. 2012. The Papal State. In: Gamberini, A, and Lazzarini, I (eds.), *The Italian Renaissance State*, 69–89. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ceci, G, and **Bartolini, U.** 1979. *Piazze e palazzi comunali di Todi*. Rev. by M Pericoli. Todi: Res Tudertinae.

Cutolo, A. 1969 [1936]. *Re Ladislao d'Angiò Durazzo*. Naples: Arturo Berisio.

Delzant, JB. 2012. 'Instaurator et fundator': Costruzione della signoria urbana e presenza monumentale del Comune (Italia centrale, fine del Medio Evo). *Bollettino della Deputazione di Storia Patria per l'Umbria*, 109 (1–2): 271–338.

Delzant, JB. 2016. Domination et participation: Modalités du gouvernement seigneurial dans les villes d'Italie centrale à fin du Moyen Âge. In: Augé, I, Gilli, P, and Granier, T (eds.), *Gouverner les hommes, gouverner les âmes*, 171–183. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne.

Delzant, JB. 2018. En plein champ? La ville, son espace et ses seigneurs, entre enracinement et itinérance du pouvoir (Italie centrale, fin du Moyen Âge). In: Buti, G, Malamut, É, and Ouerfelli, M (eds.), *Entre deux rives: Villes en Méditerranée au Moyen Âge et à l'époque moderne*, 261–292. Aix-en-Provence: Presses Universitaires de Provence.

Delzant, JB. 2020a. La construction des palais communaux, entre diffusions des modèles et interprétations locales (état pontifical, fin XII^{e}–XV^{e} siècle). In: Balossino, S, and Rao, R (eds.), *Ai margini del mondo comunale: Sedi del potere collettivo e palazzi pubblici dalle Alpi al Mediterraneo*, 107–126. Sesto Fiorentino: All'Insegna del Giglio.

Delzant, JB. 2020b. La signoria dei Trinci all'epoca del Frezzi. In Laureti, E, and Piccini, D (eds.), *Federico Frezzi e il 'Quadrireggio' nel sesto centenario della sua morte (1416–2016)*, 27–41. Ravenna: Longo.

Delzant, JB. 2022. Varano, Rodolfo (III) da. In *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*. Available at https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/bio-varano-rodolfo-iii-da_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/ [last accessed 6 January 2023].

Esch, A. 1969. *Bonifaz IX. und der Kirchenstaat*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer.

Folin, M. 2010. La dimora del principe negli Stati italiani. In: Calabi, D, and Svalduz, E (eds.), *Il Rinascimento italiano e l'Europa*. Vol. 6: *Luoghi, spazi, architetture*, 345–365. Treviso/Costabissara: Fondazione Cassamarca/Angelo Colla.

Folin, M. 2015. *Sedes tyranni*. Le residenze signorili in Italia (secoli XIV–XV). In: Crouzet-Pavan, É, and Maire Vigueur, JC (eds.), *L'art au service du prince: Paradigme italien, expériences européennes (vers 1250–vers 1500)*, 23–43. Rome: Viella.

Giannatiempo López, M. 2004. Antefatti al palazzo di Federico: Ritrovamenti, ipotesi. In: Fiore, P (ed.), *Francesco di Giorgio alla corte di Federico da Montefeltro*, vol. 1, 147–166. Florence: Olschki.

Green, L. 1990. Galvano Fiamma, Azzone Visconti and the Theory of Magnificence. *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 53: 98–113.

Jamme, A. 2003. Forteresses, centres urbains et territoire dans l'État pontifical: Logiques et méthodes de la domination à l'âge albornozien. In: Crouzet-Pavan, É (ed.), *Pouvoir et édilité: Les grands chantiers de l'Italie communale et seigneuriale*, 375–417. Rome: École française de Rome.

Jamme, A. 2011. De la République dans la monarchie? Genèse et développements diplomatiques de la contractualité dans l'État pontifical (fin XII[e] début XVI[e] siècle). In: Foronda, F (ed.), *Avant le contrat social: Le contrat politique dans l'Occident médiéval, XIII[e]– XVI[e] siècle*, 37–79. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne.

Lametti, L. 1989. Palazzo Trinci: Origine, struttura, storia e stile di una dimora signorile dell'inizio del XV secolo. In: *Signorie in Umbria tra Medioevo e Rinascimento: L'esperienza dei Trinci*. Vol. 2, 307–402. Perugia: Deputazione di Storia Patria per l'Umbria.

Lametti, L. 2001. Il palazzo: Dalle preesistenze all'Unità d'Italia. In: Benazzi, G, and Mancini, FF (eds.), *Il Palazzo Trinci di Foligno*, 51–104. Perugia: Quattroemme.

Luongo, A. 2016. *Gubbio nel Trecento: Il comune popolare e la mutazione signorile*. Rome: Viella.

Maire Vigueur, JC. 1987. *Comuni e signorie in Umbria, Marche e Lazio*. Vol. 7, pt. 2, of *Storia d'Italia*. Turin: UTET.

Maire Vigueur, JC. 2008. Les inscriptions du pouvoir dans la ville: le cas de l'Italie communale (XII[e]–XIV[e] siècle). In: Crouzet-Pavan, É, and Lecuppre-Desjardin, É (eds.), *Villes de Flandre et d'Italie (XIII[e]– XVI[e] siècle): Les enseignements d'une comparaison*, 207–234. Turnhout: Brepols.

Mancini, FF (ed.). 1997. *Il Palazzo dei Priori di Perugia*. Perugia: Quattroemme.

Nico, MG, and **Regni, C.** 1997. Il palazzo come sede del governo comunale. In: Mancini, FF (ed.), *Il Palazzo dei Priori di Perugia*, 133–151. Perugia: Quattroemme.

Partner, P. 1972. *The Lands of Saint Peter: The Papal State in the Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Piermarini, L. 2014. I palazzi pubblici nel tempo: Gli esiti conoscitivi del recente restauro. In: Bettoni, F (ed.), *I palazzi pubblici di Foligno*, 139–181. Perugia: Quattroemme.

Pirani, F. 2010. *Fermo.* Spoleto: Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo.

Pirani, F. 2014a. Comuni e signorie nello Stato della Chiesa. In: Caciorgna, MT, Carocci, S, and Zorzi, A (eds.), *I comuni di Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur: Percorsi storiografici*, 259–279. Rome: Viella.

Pirani, F. 2014b. 'In magnificis Girifalci arcis aedibus': Francesco Sforza e la città di Fermo (1434–1446). *Marca/Marche: Rivista di storia regionale*, 3: 186–206.

Raponi, A (ed.). 1977. *Camerino, città e cultura*. Camerino: Università di Camerino.

Schubring, K. 1993. Foligno e le sue mura civiche dal Duecento fino ai nostri giorni. *Bollettino Storico della Città di Foligno*, 17: 7–18.