

Preface

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Founded in 2010 and financed by the European Science Foundation, the PALATIUM research networking programme aimed at creating a common forum for research on the late medieval and early modern European court residence or palace (*palatium*) in a multi- and trans-disciplinary perspective (www.courtresidences.eu). In the broad and varied field of court studies, PALATIUM's focus on the court residence stands out as a main defining characteristic, distinguishing it clearly from similar initiatives in Europe. Fourteen research institutions from eleven European countries supported this initiative during its five-year run. Thanks are due here to all member organisations who stood behind this 'network funded by a consortium' and to its 'parent company', the European Science Foundation; but also to KU Leuven – University of Leuven on the one hand and the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München on the other, the hosts of the double event, which is reflected in the volumes no. 2 and 3 of the PALATIUM e-Publications.

Through its methodological workshops, PALATIUM meant to attract specialists in court studies (historians, art historians) ready to work with architectural historians in an interdisciplinary perspective, and to help develop new methods or tools, with the specific aim of developing user-friendly ways of presenting the research in this field to the larger community.

The collection of essays presented in the volumes no. 2 and 3 of the PALATIUM e-Publications, resulting from the Leuven meeting of 18-19 November 2011 and the Munich meeting of 13-14 April 2012, is dedicated to the reconstruction of the palace as virtual heritage. Over the past decades, digital reconstructions have proven their usefulness in visualizing palaces but also in clarifying data and research results (e.g. construction phases, ceremonial use). PALATIUM's interest focused on the methodological implications of these increasingly sophisticated tools, i.e. the interface where architectural history and digital technique must meet and interact. Within this perspective, Part I, *Digitizing and Modelling Palaces* (Leuven) focused on the digital recording and virtual modelling of historic buildings in their actual state, and the related methodological problems, while Part II, *Lost Palaces and their Afterlife. Virtual Reconstruction between Science and Media* (Munich) focused on virtual reconstructions of 'lost' buildings and their role in research on court residences. Neither of these volumes has any pretensions to covering the whole subject, but rather aims at raising awareness – on the historian of art and architecture's side – of the added value such digital tools can bring to the research on residences, and at setting out the necessary boundary markers – on the digital expert's side – guaranteeing the scientific usefulness of digital reconstruction. As the second and third volumes in PALATIUM's series of e-publications, we hope that they will easily reach their audience.