

Navigating Sixteenth Century Florence: Digital Humanities Assignment

In 1561 Duke Cosimo I de' Medici ordered a full census of Florence. Officials were dispatched to systematically walk throughout the entire city and collect important information. Census takers knocked on every door and recorded the number of occupants in each household, their names, occupations, how much rent they payed, who owned the building, and the taxable value of the building. This type of detailed information is unprecedented for the sixteenth century!

This assignment explores Sixteenth century Florence and the 1561 Ducal Census using the DECIMA mapping tool. Follow the research prompts below to discover a new perspective of the early modern city, its residents, and social dynamics. The assignment considers how occupation, socio-economics, gender, power, and historical experience can be visualized using new Digital Humanities tools. What new insights into early modern Florence does the map produce? How do these compliment, challenge, or add to what you already know of early modern urban life?

Assignment Requirements:

Write a 250 word (one page double spaced) response for **each** of the three sections below. The written response is therefore **3-4 pages total**. Times New Roman; 12 point font; double spaced, 1 inch margins.

You must also print off at least **one map** that displays your data results (eg. a printed map that shows where all bakers lived). Simply use the print function at the top right of the webpage.

A list of questions are provided in each section to help guide your responses.

The answers must be written in short essay form: an introduction, thesis statement, and clear paragraphs.

No outside research is necessary, but please explore the information on the DECIMA website

The Basics:

- 1.) Go to <http://decima-map.net> and begin exploring the DECIMA website. Go to the "Explore Data" tab and look through the Glossaries. This will help you interpret your research findings. These include translations for Italian terms.
- 2.) Under the "Explore Data" tab, refer to the "DECIMA Datasets" tab for precise information about the entry fields you will see during the assignment

3.) Click on the “How to Use DECIMA”, “Using the DECIMA WebGIS” tabs, for a primer on how to search for information on the map and how to print/export results.

3.) Click on the **”Go directly to the mapping tool”** link (on the home page) to begin the assignment. This will open up the map in a new tab.

4.) Click on the “Layer List” icon at the bottom left of the map. Turn off all layers except **“Quarters”**. This will allow you to visualize your findings more clearly

5.) Click on the “Data Query” button at the centre bottom of the map (marked by a red “D”). Here you will see a curated list of search functions. This is your home base for the assignment.

6.) When you want to save, print, or export findings use the Print button (top right of page). Screen shots can also be useful.

Part 1: Tracking Occupations

Renaissance and early modern Florence is often described as a ‘city of trades’. 1561 census takers carefully recorded the occupations of each household they visited, usually including occupational information about the house owner and renter(s). Mapping this information provides new insight into how occupation and trade impacted the city. Were civic spaces organized according to trades? Did specific occupations cluster in certain areas of the city? Why/ Why not might this be? Was there any separation between work life and social life? What trades were glorified and which were denigrated? How did this dictate the location(s) of these trades?

- Click on the “Data Query” function, and then click on the **“Decima 1561 Occupation Query”** function. Enter the trades below into EVERY field that shows up in this query (eg. enter meretrice into all fields: owner, tenant, resident 1 etc.) Use this to explore the presence of the following occupations in the city:

- **meretrice (Prostitute)**
- **beccaiio (Butcher)**
- **fornaio (baker)**
- **tessitore (textile weaver)**
- **tintore (dyer)**
- **birro (an officer in public watch- somewhat similar to a policeman)**

What spatial patterns do you notice for these occupations? **Include at least two trades in your written analysis.** Eg. Do prostitutes tend to live in one area of town? Bakers? Dyers? Why might this be?

Do you see a link between social status and space? Economics and space? Eg. What kinds of jobs take place in the outskirts of the city? In the centre?

What kinds of households are these workers living in? Do they own their homes generally? Rent? Live with many others?

Part 2: Tracking Institutions

A visitor to sixteenth century Florence would have been struck by the dozens of institutions spread throughout the city (hospitals, orphanages, convents, monasteries, and charity homes). These buildings were present in every neighbourhood and collectively they housed thousands of individuals. 1561 census takers were less interested in institutions proper (because they were non-taxable), but recorded important information about the properties that institutions owned throughout the city.

What image of Florence emerges when we map institutional holdings? What does this reveal about the influence of these institutions on the city? Think about who profited from institutional property holdings and what this reveals about power relationships? How do you think Cosimo de' Medici, anxious to solidify his power, would have interpreted the census' institutional findings?

- Click on the "Data Query" function, and then click on the "**Decima 1561 Owner Query**" function. Use this to explore the presence of the following Institutions in the city:

-Ospedale degli Innocenti (try simply searching 'Innocenti'): This was the city's main orphanage, founded in 1445. The institution was famous for the stone basin placed on the portico where parents could anonymously leave their infants to be taken in as orphans. In 1561 the institution housed 1600 children.

-Monasterio di S. Piero Maggiore: This was one of the city's most prestigious convents. Girls and women from Florence's powerful noble families called the convent home. Until the end of the sixteenth century a sacred 'marriage' ritual between the Abbess of the convent and the Archbishop of Florence was enacted to bind the bishop to his See.

* Click on the "Layer List" tab (bottom left) and turn on the "**Digital Florence Projects**" layer. This will allow you to follow a link to a video about digital reconstructions of the S. Piero Maggiore church

- S. Elisabetta degli Convertite (try searching 'Convertite'): This convent for repentant prostitutes was located on the south side of the Arno river, and was one of the city's poorest convents. Perpetually underfunded, the nuns repeatedly petitioned the city for funds, food, and subsidiaries. Female sex workers were often forced into the institution after being fined for crimes related to sex work. Unlike nuns of S. Piero Maggiore, these

women did not bring generous convent dowries with them upon entering the institution. There were 125 residents in 1561.

How many property holdings does each institution possess?

Do they tend to cluster in one area of the city? Why might this be/not be?

What kind of incomes are these institutions earning from their properties? Can you think of how institutions may have used these incomes?

What kind of class and gender dynamics can you begin to see from these findings? Are these surprising in any way?

Where institutions major property owners in early modern Florence?

Part 3: Following the Money

Where did the rich live and where did the poor live? Sixteenth century Florence was deeply classist. The rich lived in ornate *palazzi*, which they filled with objects, artworks, and furnishings brought to Florence from around the world. The poor and working classes often lived in small, crowded apartments which they almost always rented. Did the poor tend to live in specific areas of the city? Who were they renting from? Did the rich lay claim to specific neighbourhoods? How did the centre of the city compare to the outskirts?

- Click on the “Data Query” function, and then click on the “**Decima 1561 Property Value Query**” function. Use this to explore property values across the city:
- What was the highest assessed residential property in Florence? Who did it belong to? Explore by putting a number into the ‘**Taxed value in scudi is at least**’ field... *hint* properties with tax assessments in the 90-100 scudi range would be considered high value. These were extremely wealthy homes. Move up from there (eg. 150, 200, 300) until you find the highest assessed property.
- Where were low assessed and low rent properties located? Are there lots of them, or few? Explore by putting a minimum assessment figure (eg. 1 scudi) in the “Taxed value in scudi is at least” field and a maximum assessment figure (eg. 3 scudi) in the “Assessment Scudi is at most” field. This will show you all properties that fall within this range.
- Which properties does the Duke officially own? The Duchess? Try searching Duke: “**Duca**” and Duchess: “**Duchessa**” in the Owner Query function. How do their property holding compare to institutional property holding examined above?

