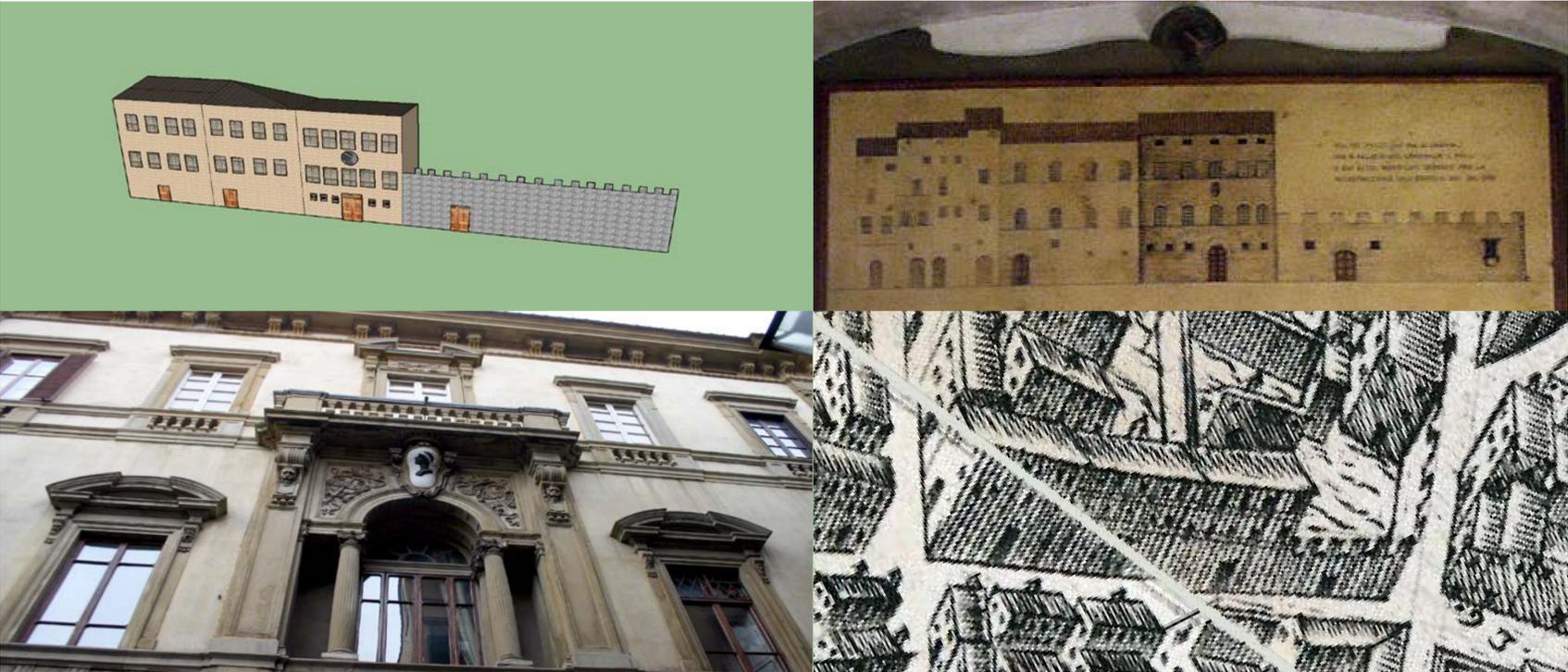
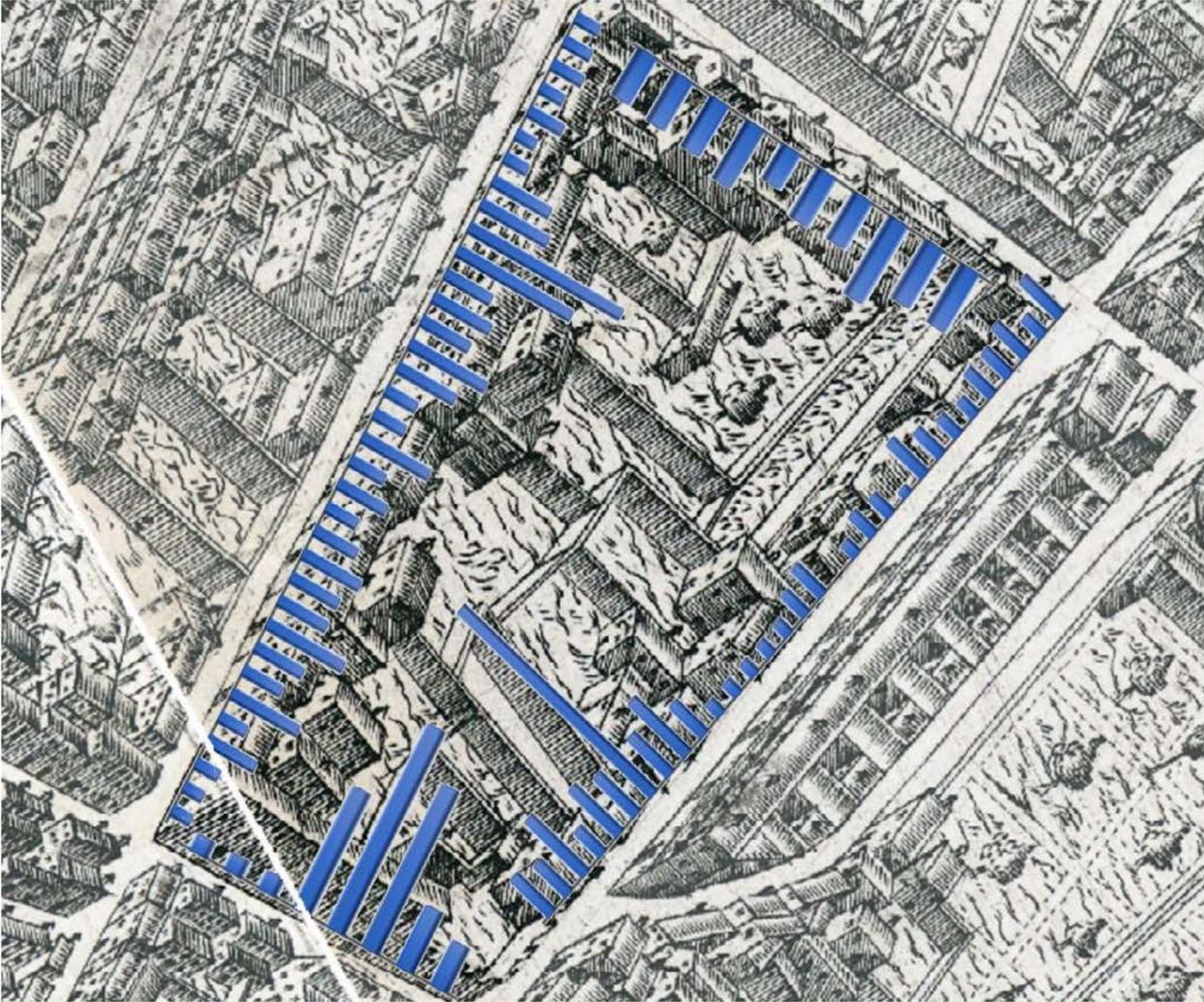


Wealth Distribution in San Giovanni

Palazzo Pucci, Palazzo Gerini, and Palazzo Niccolini in Sixteenth-century Florence

by Heather McTaggart



Palazzo Gerini, Via Ricasoli 42

Palazzo Gerini was first built and owned by the Ginori family, a wealthy banking family allied with the Medici in the fifteenth century. However, the Ginori family would also go on to align with other notable families who had rivalled the Medici, such as the Strozzi. The family descends from Gino Benvenuto, a notary, who immigrated to Florence from Calenzano in 1304. The Ginori gradually gained influence within the city of Florence with members of the family eventually occupying positions such as prior, a position once held by the renowned poet Dante Alighieri. The Salviati family eventually came to own this property in 1579, before the Gerini acquired it in 1650 and to whom the palazzo owes its current name. However, the Ginori family also constructed the Palazzo Ginori, located on Via de' Ginori in San Giovanni in the fifteenth century and, like the Palazzo Pucci, the family has occupied their palazzo ever since.

Palazzo Niccolini, Via dei Servi 15

Built from 1542 to 1548, this palazzo was initially meant to be the home of Sebastiano Ciaini of Montauto. The Montauto family were influential bankers in Rome, however, the Sack of Rome momentarily halted their prosperity. They eventually regained influence in the next decades once Paul III was elected pope as the Montauto family dealt closely with the Farnese family, with the Farnese often using the Mon-

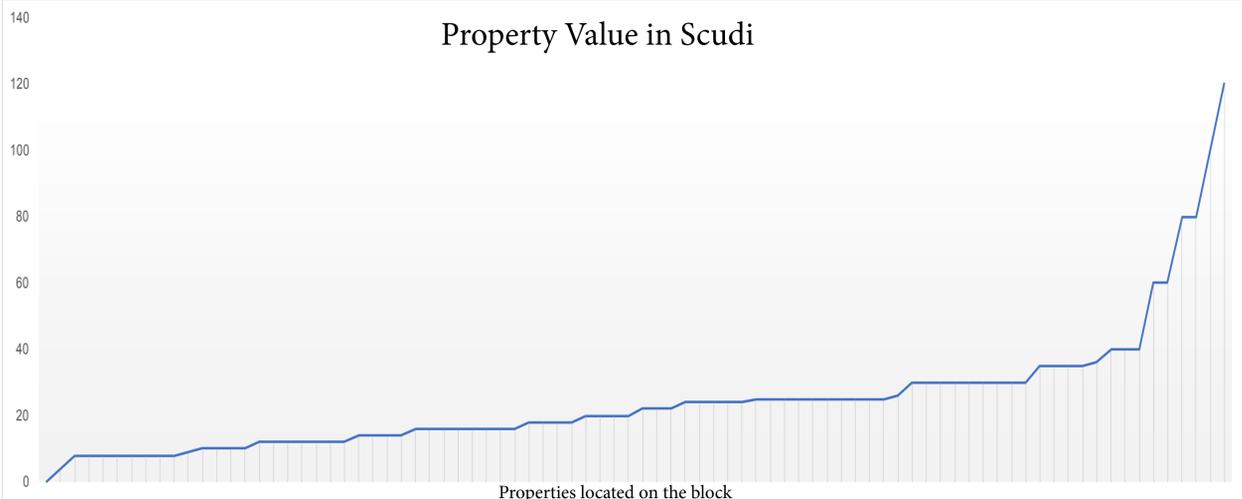
tauto bank to pay for their art patronage. The Montauto also worked closely with the Ginori family in Florence, and therefore it is perhaps unsurprising that they chose to construct their palazzo in the same block as their financial partners. However, Sebastiano passed away before his palazzo reached completion, so the property was quickly sold to Giovanni Niccolini in 1575. While Niccolini heavily renovated and rejuvenated the property, the property continued to change hands and reflect contemporary tastes, as demonstrated by the nineteenth-century façade the building currently possesses.

Palazzo Pucci, Via dei Pucci 4

Palazzo Pucci was originally constructed in the medieval period, though its current condition reflects an eighteenth-century restoration. Unlike the other properties mentioned, Palazzo Pucci has been continuously owned and occupied by the Pucci family since 1480. Their ownership is demonstrated by the family's crest, a Moor's head, which still rests above the main entrance. This crest can be traced from thirteenth century depictions of the property. This ownership is also notable as many Pucci properties were seized in 1559 when Pandolfo Pucci was removed from the court of Cosimo de' Medici I for declaring that he supported the Republic of Florence and disapproved of Florence's political configuration under Cosimo. The Pucci later made peace with the Medici and Niccolò Pucci was given back the palazzo.

Wealth

Palazzo Pucci is exemplary as a property which has remained under an individual family's ownership for over 500 years. However, the influence and wealth of the Pucci family are part of a greater trend of wealth retention in Florentine history. In 2011, Italian economists Guglielmo Barone and Sauro Mocetti determined that the wealthiest Florentine families in 1427 were still the wealthiest families in Florence. The economists had discovered approximately 900 surnames in the 1427 tax data which corresponded with the current wealthiest families of Florence. Therefore, familial ties have remained a dominating force in the economic configuration of Florence and indicates that an individual's social capital is strongly associated with their family background. While this ultimately demonstrates the longevity of Florentine families, it is unclear what percentage of these current families are direct descendants of their fifteenth-century namesakes.



Wealth distribution: the majority of properties are worth less than 20 scudi, with the notable exception of a few properties worth 80 scudi or more.

Wealth Relations

The block highlighted here is largely a residential space with a few properties owned by local monasteries and church organizations. There are also over 20 businesses reported in the 1561 census data for the block, making the area both highly diverse and representative of Florence. The property values of the block also indicate that the area is not particularly unique as the average property value is 25 scudi, almost identical to the average property values of the block to its left. However, the area is punctuated with incredibly valuable properties, the most valuable being worth 120 scudi. The Palazzi highlighted belong to some of the wealthiest families in Florence, all of which were intimately connected with Florentine banking.

Amidst the greater commercial revolution of Italy during its economic recovery in the fifteenth century, Florence's prosperity as a commercial center fluctuated. However, Florentine merchants had begun to travel abroad into the heart of Europe, creating an extensive trade network. Additionally, the florin began to circulate through the financial markets of western Europe. The florin's success and Florentines' ability to develop new techniques of transferring credit abroad

thereby solidified Florence's position as the leading center for European banking. The rise of Florentine bankers is thus representative of the palazzi located in this block, as each was built by a prominent Florentine banking family while Florentine banks were consolidating their economic influence in Europe.

Yet despite the notable presence of these banking families, here they occupy an economically diverse area. While the poorest inhabitants of Florence were often placed on particular streets and segregated from their wealthier counterparts, Florentines continued to live in occupational diversity and larger processes of gentrification did not occur. Though it is unknown if done purposefully out of self-interest, or by sheer coincidence, professionals such as butchers were evenly distributed throughout the city. Therefore, spaces and districts were not reserved for members of a certain profession, guild, or socioeconomic status during the period. Thus, this block represents the economically pluralistic makeup of the early modern city as members of the Pucci family could live in a luxurious palazzo in the same block as those living in inexpensive church owned properties.

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