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Chiara Bonacchi\*, Marta Lorenzon\*\*

# Assessing the transforming social values of cities in the *longue durée*: analysis of a Florence neighbourhood from the Middle Ages to the present

## 1. Introduction

This article proposes an approach to study the relationship between different social values assigned to urban built environments in the past and present. This methodology will be helpful to inform sustainable decision-making on the management and interpretation of 'deep cities' today. In particular, we will illustrate the usefulness of joining up building archaeology and heritage studies to analyse 'the long-term, temporal and transformative character of urban heritage' (Gutormsen 2020, p. 36). We will show how combining the topo-stratigraphic analysis of architecture with research on contemporary public interpretations of urban heritage enables a fuller examination of continuity and change in the social values of cities. Such an assessment is especially important now, in a global arena that is more than ever carefully re-considering how urban spaces are staged and presented. What and whose values are memorialized? How can we establish whether these memorializations are inclusive or privilege the position of some over others? What actions are acceptable to address exclusive memorializations? Various potentially challenging narratives may be celebrated through urban fabrics in Italy and the rest of Europe. Some are better known, more tragic and visible, such as those developed during fascist or Nazi regimes, while others are less painful and remain more subtly hidden. We choose to draw attention to the latter through the example of a neighbourhood in Florence. Leveraging re-

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Authors' contribution statement: CB and ML developed the conceptual framework; CB conducted the archaeological and historical research including the stratigraphic analysis of standing buildings; ML enhanced the interpretation provided by CB drawing on architectural and anthropological theory; CB and ML developed the interpretation of contemporary values and wrote the paper.

search traditions from building archaeology, architectural anthropology and heritage, we reveal the social values emerging from the connections of people, architecture and urban space from the late medieval period to the present (11<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> centuries). The 11<sup>th</sup> century marked in fact the beginning of a 'building boom' for Florence, as for other towns in the centre-north of Italy, and the city has been inhabited and transformed ever since.

Urban centres have crucially influenced the shaping and performance of complex relationships between individuals, communities and governments, especially as they are *loci* for the networking of actors negotiating variable ideas of the 'public' and the 'private' (Giddens 1984, pp. 127-129). So far, however, research has tended to examine this central role of cities in one of two possible ways. Some works have focused on the deeper past through an archaeological and historical approach, as in the cases of Palazzo Davanzati (e.g., Donato, Vanni Desideri 2001). Others have devoted their attention to present and recent periods taking a heritage studies perspective. As part of this latter group of published works, Jones (2011) stressed the importance of analysing the interrelations of people, memories and places within the urban environment to shed light on identity making processes. The private decisions and public policies that underpin the development of a neighbourhood in the *longue durée* can be utilized as proxies to understand the interplay between individuals and collectives and how power dynamics between them are constructed and maintained. Here we understand social values embedded in urban built environments as stemming from the interaction of people, architecture and urban space: how meanings are attributed to buildings and urban spaces, and the agency that these two exercise on people in return over time (Lefebvre 1974; Segaud 2010, pp. 52–68).

In order to investigate social values diachronically, we propose to combine research traditions that are closely related but often pursued for the study of urban environments at the exclusion of each other. Until now, building archaeology has mainly been employed to investigate the construction history of surviving architecture in relation to the topographic development of urban areas with the purpose of shedding light on aspects of the human past. Through this methodology, it has been possible to answer a rich and diverse array of questions such as those addressing building industries and economies, the relationship between public and private space and the functions and symbolism of specific architectonic chrono-typologies (e.g., Vannini, Nucciotti, Donato 2003; Brogiolo, Chavarría Arnau, Valenti 2005; Nucciotti 2010). At the same time, the blossoming of structuralist and post-structuralist theories in archaeology has led to in-depth studies aimed at understanding the social role of architecture for communities (Tilley 2006, pp. 7-8; Segaud 2010, pp. 115-138). Architectural anthropology investigates architectural representation based on the 'spatial theory of society' (Kent 1990, p. 129). It places emphasis on the entities (i.e., public and private) that are represented by buildings, on symbolism, and on the signifi-

cance of architecture to communities (Pauls 2006; Buchli 2013, pp. 47-48; Stender 2017). Buchli (2013, p. 168) has interestingly pointed out that only a diachronic perspective allows us to grasp the transforming social values embedded within architecture. Borrowing from architectural anthropology to better interpret the findings emerging from the topo-stratigraphic analysis may therefore help us explain, for example, those cases in which elements of the built environment are utilized for legitimization purposes or to showcase the power of newly established political arrangements. In discussing the meanings associated with the urban built environment, we also borrow from Rapoport's theorization (1990, pp. 221-222). The author defines cosmological and philosophical meanings as 'high-level', while 'middle-level' meanings refer to identity status, wealth and power, and low-level ones pertain to recurring memories of the spaces and general habits. This classification has been successfully applied before, for example, by Smith to examine the planning and architectural construction of early cities (Smith 2007, p. 30).

Heritage studies complements building archaeology by providing information on the present-day societal relevance of urban centres. In this article, heritage is understood as the processes and outcomes of interacting with objects, places and practices from the past and assigning cultural and social meanings to them (Harrison 2013, pp. 13-15). The conservation and management of built heritage has traditionally prioritized material resources and their aesthetic qualities over intangible social values. Furthermore, Pendlebury (2013) notes that the Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD) implemented through conservation is also linked to other elite discourses and agendas. Heritage industries, including those relating to the built environment, may support select kinds of memorialization that are challenged through the creation of 'counter-memories' and 'counter-histories'. Here we propose to bridge the conceptual gap between AHD and people-centred values of the urban environment by connecting interpretations generated by building archaeology with the results of the study of present-day public memorializations. We will do this by analysing the networking at play between people, architecture and urban space in one of the parts of Florence where the Buondelmonti family established their presence in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

## **2. The urbanization of a family rooted in the countryside**

In its period of maximum extension, medieval Florence stretched on both banks of the river Arno. Our case study neighbourhood is situated north of the Arno, along the southern side of the city, in the area we will refer to as the Topographic Unit (TU) (fig. 1). This TU is demarcated by Piazza Santa Trinita (to the west), via delle Terme (to the north), via Por Santa Maria (to the east) and Borgo SS. Apostoli (to the south). It is crossed longitudinally (Northeast–Southwest) by



very narrow alleys that mark the boundaries of compact architectural complexes. Within the TU, three Building Units (BU1, BU2 and BU3) make up one homogeneous Architectural Complex (AC), delimited by Chiasso Cornino, Borgo SS. Apostoli, Chiasso delle Misure and via delle Terme. The tower in via delle Terme n 9–11 (BU1) is located in the northern part of the TU; the *palatium* in Borgo SS. Apostoli n 20–22 (BU3) is on the south-west side of the TU and, adjacent to it, is the tower in Borgo SS. Apostoli n 18 (BU2). The whole TU was surveyed systematically, and the three BUs are the only ones with at least one clearly visible façade that is not plastered and could be analysed stratigraphically (see fig. 1).

When the Roman colony of *Florentia* was established, between 30 and 15 B.C., the TU was an *extra moenia* territory (Scampoli 2010). The Roman circle of walls made of bricks had in fact a trapezoidal shape. Its eastern side coincided with via del Proconsole, the northern stretch with via Cerretani, the western line with via Tornabuoni, and the southern line with via Vacchereccia probably reaching as far as Piazza Santa Trinita (Cianferoni 2015, p. 56). This southern stretch followed the natural features of the environment and ran parallel to the Arno rather than to the northern side. These walls however soon became ‘ineffective’ as demonstrated by the fact that the urban nucleus had grown beyond them by the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. at least (Vannini, Scampoli 2015, pp. 248–249). In the Hadrianic period (2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.), new modifications to the urban environment comprised major *extra moenia* expansion. In the area of Borgo SS. Apostoli, these included overall urbanistic re-planning as well as vital interventions of water management and street renovation (Francovich *et al.* 2007; Vannini, Scampoli 2015). At this point in time a paved road was constructed along the route of contemporary Borgo SS. Apostoli to facilitate traffic out of the city (Scampoli 2010, pp. 19–20). Thereafter, during late antiquity (4<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries), Florence contracted but retained liveliness thanks to the *basiliche* that were erected in peripheral areas within the pagan centre of Roman *Florentia* (i.e., S. Reparata and S. Cecilia) and just outside of it (i.e., S. Lorenzo and S. Felicità) (Vannini, Scampoli 2015). After about two centuries of relative ‘collapse’, the city started a process of Carolingian ‘awakening’ in which the TU played a crucial role. A stretch of wall connecting the remains of the Roman theatre with the Arno was built to defend Borgo SS. Apostoli, which had become an area of significant strategic importance (Vannini, Scampoli 2015).

The first written source attesting the existence of Borgo SS. Apostoli is dated to 1075 and mentions a house ‘*posita prope ecclesiam*’ (trans. ‘located near a church’) that belonged to Durante, known as Rustichello, who donated it to the bishop Ranieri (Trotta 1992, p. 18). The *ecclesia* cited in the document is the church of SS. Apostoli, in the southern part of the TU. Its construction is only slightly posterior to that of Santa Trinita, on the western side of the TU (Marchini 1987, p. 7). In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the TU started to experience a building development, to which the da Montebuoni certainly contributed. This family of *domini loci*, from whom both the Buondelmonti and the Scolari descended, had the centre of

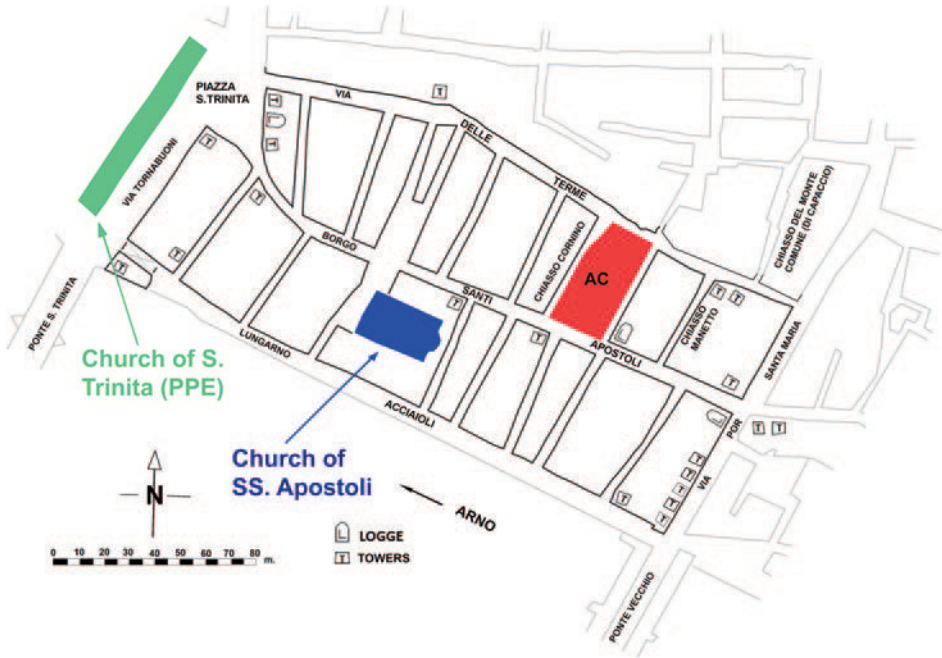


Fig. 1. Map of the Topographic Unit (TU) and of the Architectural Complex (AC).

their power in the countryside. They derived their name from the location of a castle in contemporary Impruneta<sup>1</sup> which functioned as both their primary residence and as the administrative centre for the landed properties that the family had owned in the vicinity since the 9<sup>th</sup> century (Faini 2009; 2010, p. 27). The geographically compact nature of this land patrimony, centred on a *castrum*, suggests that the owners were already exercising their *diritti signorili* (trans: 'stately rights') in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, even if we do not have documentary sources confirming this hypothesis until the 12<sup>th</sup> century when *Uguiczone de Monteboni* donated *iura* in Petrocello (Faini 2009). Despite being rooted in the countryside, the family had ties with Florence through their loyalty towards the bishop and had owned land and buildings in the city since at least 1048 when Gisla, widow of Ranieri di Montebono (Davidsohn 1956, p. 510), bought a house near the '*postierla filiorum bone memorie Eritii*' (Coltibuono, 1048 maggio 21, n. 38, ad annum; Faini 2009). The Buondelmonti claimed a series of properties in Oltrarno, in the area of Borgo San Felice, and BU1, BU2 and the structures that predated BU3 have been variously attributed to the Buondelmonti family (Carocci 1897, p. 145; Fanelli 1980,

<sup>1</sup> Impruneta is a location to the south of Florence.

pp. 50-51; Trotta 1992, p. 20; Macci, Orgera 1994). Macci Orgera (1994, p. 119) cites a codex that refers to BU1, the loggia in front of the Palace of the Acciaiuoli (BU3), and Chiasso delle Misure as possessions of the Buondelmonti: *'I Buondelmonti avevano torre, loggia e vicolo, la torre è quella che vedesi per la parte di Terma, dove sotto vi abita un bottaio, la loggia è quella che è davanti alla casa degli Acciaiuoli, il vicolo è quello dove passa la torre e la loggia'* (trans. 'The Buondelmonti had a tower, a loggia and an alley, the tower is the one you see from Terma and under which a cooper lives, the loggia is the one in front of the house of the Acciaiuoli, the alley is that by the loggia and the tower').

Through the stratigraphic analysis of the AC, it was possible to identify seven construction phases. The first dates to the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries and relates to the erection of BU1. The latter has a square plan and its northern side, here named Front Elevation 1 (FE1), measures 4.62 metres in length. Information on the original height of the building cannot be inferred because the upper part of BU1 – the Stratigraphic Unit 170 (SU 170) – is a modern addition (fig. 2). Nevertheless, it is informative and important to note that the current elevation of BU1 is 28.60 metres, the equivalent of 50 *braccia fiorentine* (transl. 'Florentine arms'), which was the maximum height allowed for towers after a law passed in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century (Fanelli 1980; Trotta 1992). The construction of the tower as an expression of military power and social status is the middle-level meaning embedded in the architecture (Rapoport 1990, p. 221). Modern transformations maintained the elevation that the building acquired post-1250 and preserved the social value expressed by the effective enforcement of public policy over private interest. Higher towers would have better served military purposes and projected outwards the prestige of their private owners. Therefore, the act of complying with the Florentine regulations by lowering the tower (BU1) inscribed the significance of civic obedience in its fabric. This change is part of the transformation of Florence into a 'capital'-like urban centre with three core nuclei: the economic one in the square of the New Market; the political centre in piazza Signoria, and the ecclesiastic centre in S. Giovanni. Such a re-arrangement reflected a new way of 'living' the city (Vannini 2015, p. 75).

Six openings are visible in the façade of BU1 (FE1): four portals, of which only one is located at ground-floor level, a square window and a *monofora*. In its first phase, however, BU1 did not have a portal at ground-floor level and the absence of direct access to the road suggests an original 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup>-century dating. The later opening of the portal, during the 13<sup>th</sup> century, is evidenced by the stratigraphic analysis of FE1, which shows that SU 1, 13, 35, 36, 27, 21 and 3 are cut by SU -5. In addition, some of the building blocks external to SU -5 were lowered in order to mark the area where the portal would need to be opened (fig. 3). The two masonry types M1 (with its sub-type M1A) and M2 were identified on the front elevation of BU1 and can be attributed to the first construction phase based on the results of the stratigraphic analysis. M1 com-

Stratigraphic analysis of BU1, FE1

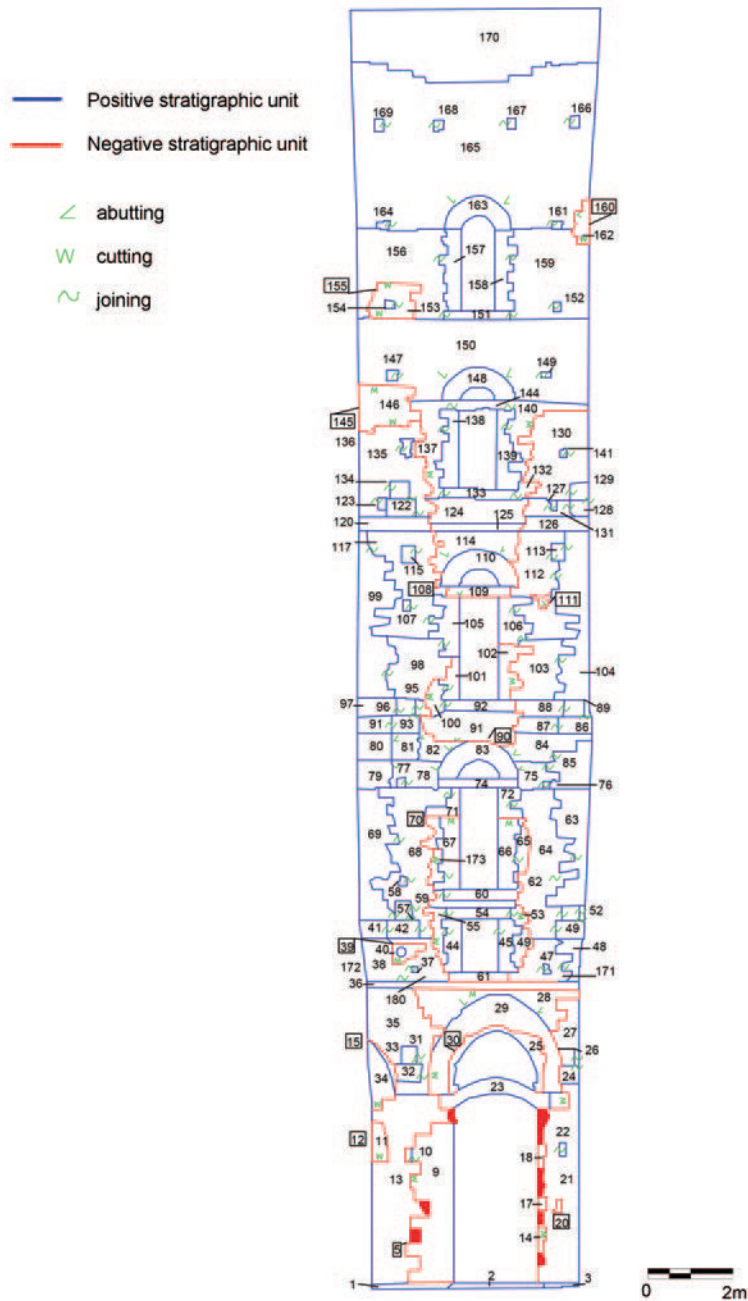


Fig. 2. Stratigraphic analysis of BU1, FE1.

**Stratigraphic analysis of BU1, FE1 and BU2, FE1 with construction Phases I and II**

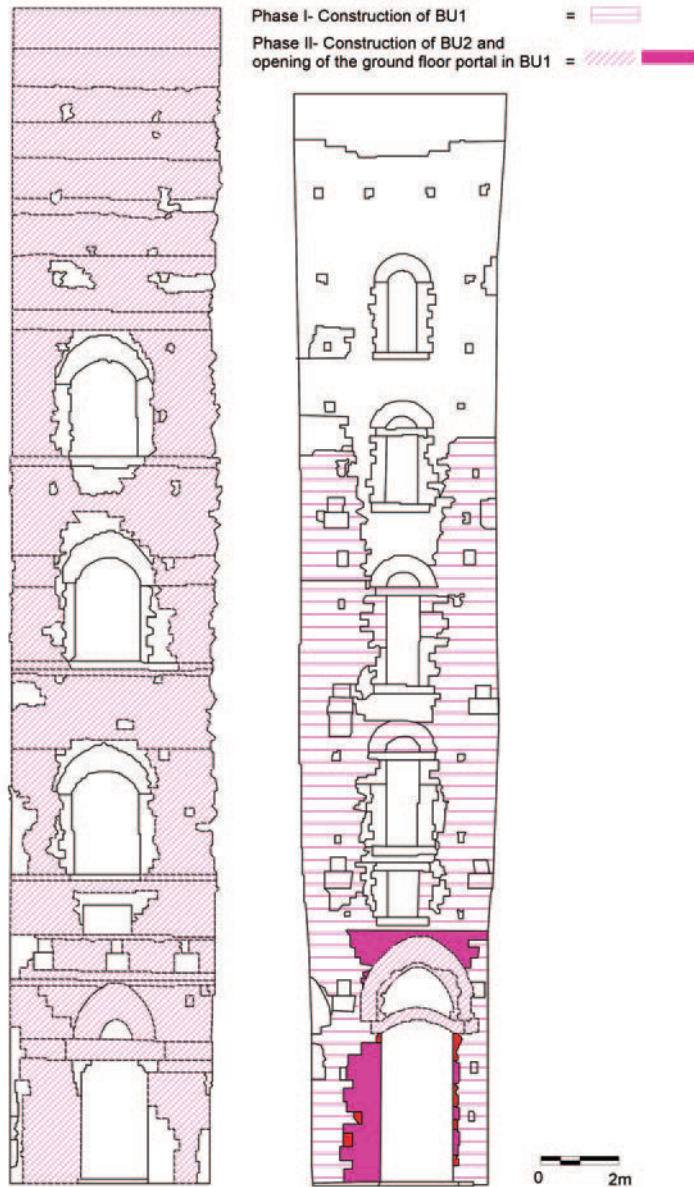


Fig. 3. Stratigraphic analysis of BU1, FE1 and BU2, FE2, with visualisation of construction phases I and II.



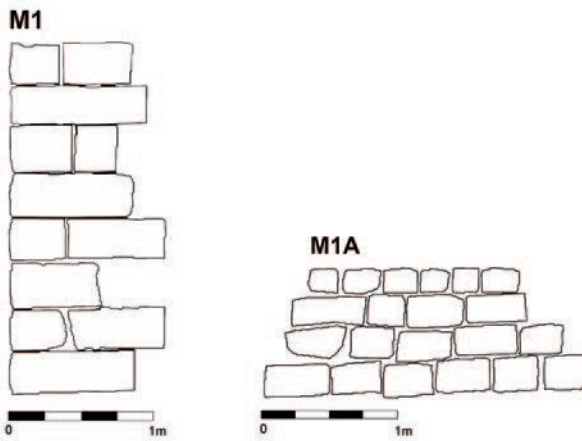


Fig. 4. Masonry type M1 and sub-type M1A.

prises an undistinguished corner. It is composed of rusticated and point-dressed sandstone ashlar of medium-to-large dimensions, prevalently rectangular and rarely square (fig. 4). The ashlar are laid in horizontal and parallel rows, each with a homogeneous height (17.4 to 26 centimetres per row) and characterized by the presence of very rare sandstone wedges. The latter are longish and rectangular, and located within the joints (they are about 2% of the masonry). Both vertical and horizontal joints are very thin and homogeneous. Sub-type M1A differs from M1 only by the lower and even more homogeneous height of its rows, which measure up to 20 centimetres and have a higher number of long, rectangular blocks compared to M1 (SU35) (fig. 4). Differently, M2 is made of sandstone blocks of medium dimensions and rectangular or square shape, with no signs of stone dressing (fig. 5). The blocks are arranged in mostly horizontal and parallel rows, built with blocks of similar shapes and dimensions. Vertical and horizontal joints are homogeneous but large. The masonry bonds in a quoin corner, built with medium-sized rectangular blocks that were cut and laid in rows with thin vertical and horizontal joints. The sandstone wedges are frequent, rectangular and vertically placed in the joints, making up about 19% of the masonry.

The fact that M1, with its sub-type M1A, presents rusticated ashlar blocks that are usually found in ground floor masonries reveals a clear intent, implemented by the builders, to foreground the value of the structure in the portion of architecture immediately visible to the whole community from the road. Such emphasis was most likely a proxy of the family's social status and a sign of their leadership role (Geertz 1980; Smith 2007, p. 36). These architectural decisions contributed to shaping the relationship between building owners, the rest of the community

inhabiting the TU and the city at large. They also suggest that private individuals devoted particular attention to the development of the urban space during the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Although, at this time, the Buondelmonti were already contributing to the urban fabric of Florence, there is however no evidence that they actually resided in the TU. The fact that BU1 lacked a portal at ground-floor level, together with the very small size of its plan, suggests that this building served a primarily military function, as an urban fortification owned by the family, and also a symbolic one, as a distinct mark of their prestige among the noble families of the city (Pollak 2010, pp. 155–224; Nevola 2013). Towers of this kind were in fact central features in the urban guerrilla warfare of the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries.

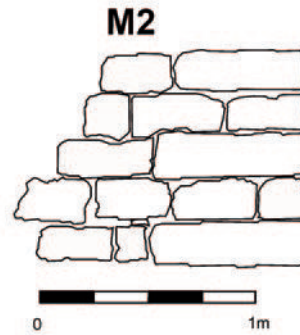


Fig. 5. Masonry type M2.

### 3. The Buondelmonti consolidate their presence in the city

After the destruction of their castle by the Florentines in 1135, the Buondelmonti were not required to give up their other possessions, so they moved to the city and became Florentine citizens<sup>2</sup>. They ascended to the ranks of the governing elite, as first attested by documentary sources dating to 1173. From 1200 onwards, the family was more integrated into the urban aristocracy and took sides in that set of synergies and alliances that would result in the Guelf party (Faini 2009; 2010, p. 273). At the same time, and for the whole of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the extension of Florence increased. The city came to coincide roughly with the territory it covered during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. expansion of *Florentia* and was encircled by the communal walls built in 1172–5 (Marcotulli, Torsellini 2015; Vannini, Scampoli 2015). The process of gradual acquisition of power and the greater participation of the Buondelmonti in public and institutional life ran parallel to their rising influence on the development of the city. The construction of compact architectural complexes was in fact functional in the consolidation of the strength and prestige of elite families and situations of conflict were managed through urban strongholds (Nicholas 2014, p. 197).

The topo-stratigraphic analysis undertaken on the AC shows that, in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Buondelmonti commissioned three new buildings: the tower BU2

<sup>2</sup> Cronaca fiorentina di Stefani, rubric 42, p. 23: "*furono fatti cittadini di Firenze e vennono ad abitare a Firenze*" (trans: 'they were made citizens of Florence and came to live in Florence').

and two adjacent houses that would subsequently be transformed into the Acciaïoli palace (BU3). BU2 has a square plan with a side of 5.20 metres that corresponds to the plot size in use in 13<sup>th</sup>-century Florence; this supports the hypothesis that the original phase of BU2 dates to this period (Sznura 1975, p. 25). The larger plan of BU2 compared to BU1 allowed more space for residential, productive or commercial uses, and these were also made possible by the presence of a portal on the ground floor of the tower. Considering that BU2 is anterior to the construction of the houses, it is likely that it was originally built during the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Phase II). Today the height of BU2 is 30.6 metres, with plaster laid upon the last two metres and, therefore, we assume that the tower was lowered to conform with the law passed in 1250 (see above). Once again 'public' institutions, now expressed by the Primo Popolo (i.e., government of Florence from 1250 to 1260), strongly influenced the shape, function and ideological meanings of private constructions. It is also important to remember however that, in this period, the Buondelmonti held prominent public positions such as those of *potesta'* and *priore* (Bargellini, Guarnieri 1973). Therefore, there might have been higher pressure on them to comply with public law and, indeed, an overlap between what they perceived as private and as public. The Buondelmonti's adherence to the regulations imposed by the city authorities as well as their commitment to the urban design of the TU indicate a vested interest and the will to display their newly acquired political power.

Of the four openings currently visible in the façade of BU2 only the ground floor portal pertains to the original construction phase in the 13<sup>th</sup> century while the three windows above that portal were added subsequently (fig. 6). The masonry of BU2 however can be dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century almost in its entirety, even though the limits of the east corner of the building are not preserved due to the collapse evidenced by SU -138. The dating is further backed by the presence of key architectural characteristics that are typical of the 1200s such as the belt course in sandstone and the three corbels located on the ground floor, which were likely supporting an awning. Three masonry types were identified in BU2: M2, which evidently has a long chronological spectrum from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, M4 and M5, with its sub-type M5A (fig. 7). The distribution of masonry types reveals that the quality of the construction decreases moving upwards. The presence, at ground-floor level, of squared ashlar dressed/flattened with a flat-blade tool (i.e., *ascettino*), for example, suggests the continued intent of the commissioners to confirm their social status through more carefully prepared and aesthetically pleasing materials.

The third building phase (Phase III) of the AC can also be dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century and consists of the construction of the two houses mentioned before (fig. 8). It is not possible to establish the length of the street front of the West building, as the east corner was removed with an operation of 'cut and replace'

## Stratigraphic analysis of BU2, FE1 and BU3, FE1

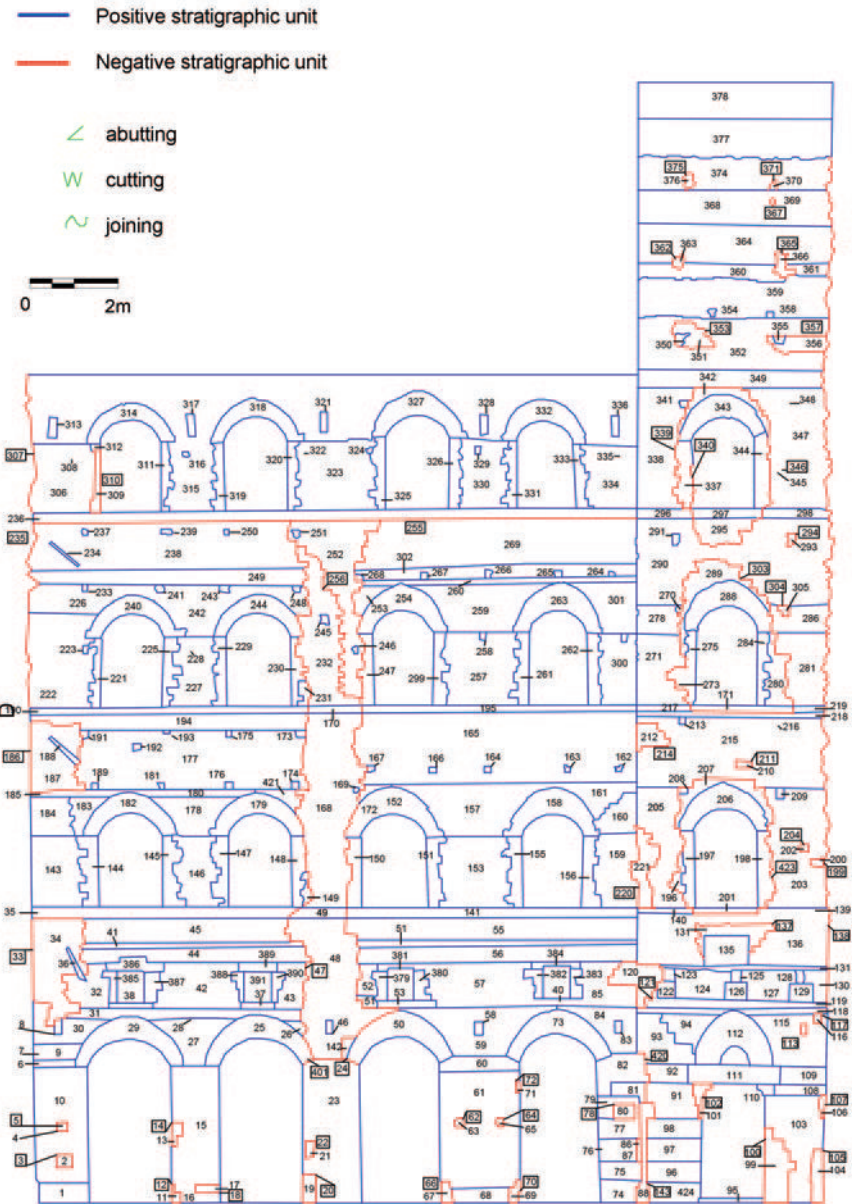


Fig. 6. Stratigraphic analysis of BU2, FE1 and BU3, FE1.

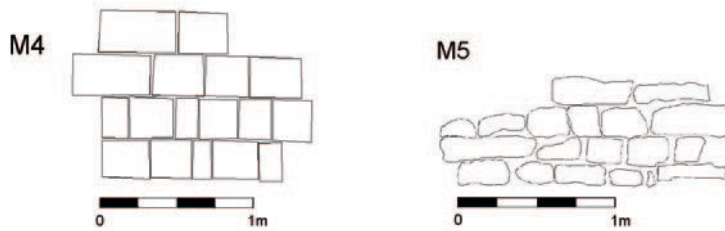


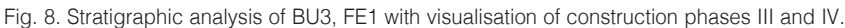
Fig. 7. Masonry types M4 and M5.

in the 1300s when the house was joined to the neighbouring domestic unit. We can however infer the length of the street front of the East house (8.20 m), since two ashlar from the west corner survive at the ground-floor level (SU 142). The east corner is partially preserved at the ground floor and in its entirety from the first floor upwards. The West house reached a lower height than the East house and was originally separated from it, as evidenced by the lack of alignment of the putlog holes between the two houses and by the sensibly higher upper surface of the window arches (i.e., first and second floors) and of the *fondachi* arches of the West house. Yet, both houses had *fondachi* and at least two storeys above the ground floor. These differences only pertain however to the first and second floors; by contrast, the uniform construction of the third floor suggests that this was added in the 14<sup>th</sup> century through a single intervention. At third-floor level, all the openings are homogeneous and the putlog holes are aligned (fig. 8). The stratigraphic cut SU -87 in the ground-floor level facing and the stratigraphic relation between BU3 and BU2, with BU3 abutting BU2 from the first floor upward, indicates that the construction of the East house in BU3 is posterior to BU2.

The decision to 'cut' the lower part of BU2 to connect the first floor of the house to the tower was most probably motivated by the desire to structurally strengthen the East house. The strategy changed for the upper storeys, where the house abuts the tower but is not connected to it. This different solution may have been opportunistic but could also have carried symbolic and ideological meanings. Keeping the tower as a distinct unit from the domestic context could in fact be seen as a way to maintain the prevalently military function that the building originally had, while at the same time the new structures emphasized the socio-political and economic power exerted by the family (Rapoport 1990, 221–223). Five masonry types characterize the third building phase: M6 and its sub-type M6A (SU10), both present at the ground floor of BU3; M7 and its sub-type M7A, to be found in the left and right parts of the first floor of BU3 respectively; and M8, which was identified in the western half of the second floor of



Location of the interventions carried out by the Buondelmonti to unify the façade of the two houses that constituted BU3 (Phase IV)



BU3. From the distribution of masonry types in BU3, we noted that there are marked differences horizontally (i.e., the types present in one house are different from those of the other house in each floor) and vertically (i.e., lower quality of the masonry moving upwards). The similarity between the stone working and stone dressing techniques used in M4 (Phase II, dated to the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century) and M6 (second half 13<sup>th</sup> century) is most likely a result of the fact that they were constructed in close time periods. It may also indicate the desire to create aesthetic homogeneity and enhance the appearance of architecture that was visible from the busy road of Borgo SS. Apostoli. The fourth building phase (Phase IV), dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century – probably the second half of the century – is when the two houses were connected at the ground-floor level, most likely with

Location of the intervention carried out by the Acciaoli on BU2 and BU3 (Phase V)

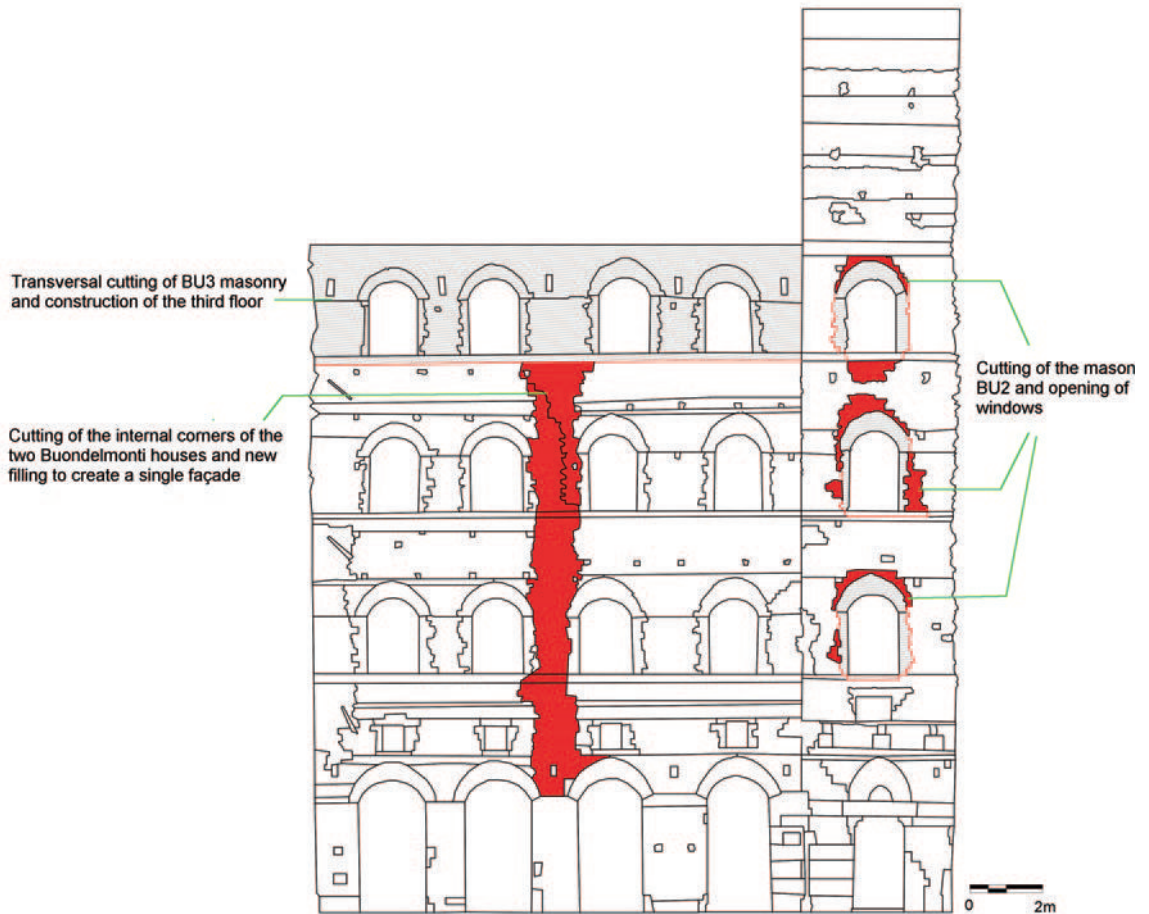


Fig. 9. Stratigraphic analysis of BU2, FE1 and BU3, FE1 with visualisation of phase V.

the intent of guaranteeing structural stability to the buildings (fig. 9). In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Buondelmonti still owned substantial properties in the countryside, particularly in the areas around Impruneta, which continued to be the main source of their income (Bizzocchi 1982, p. 4). By that time, however, the family was also rooted in the city, as shown by the analysis we have discussed. They held public positions and had consolidated their strength and status through at least one architectural complex of high symbolic value, although within the limits of the urban planning legislation in effect.

#### 4. The dissolution of the lineage and its contemporary re-invention

The fifth building phase (Phase V) consists of the transformation of the two 13<sup>th</sup> century houses into a palace by the Acciaioli family and can be dated to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. We know in fact that the palace was already in existence in 1359 when it was mentioned in the will of the Gran Siniscalco Niccolo' di Giovanni Acciaioli. In this document, Niccolò indicated the *ospitium suum de Florentia* amongst his bequests to the monastery of the Certosa of Florence (Ginori Lisci 1972, p. 119). While the palace was completed by connecting the two houses, a series of further interventions took place to create the impression of a uniform building. The most prominent changes comprised the construction of a third storey and the opening of three windows in BU2 (see the cuts in BU2: SU -423, -303, -339). The similarity of the typology, construction and stone dressing techniques used for these openings suggests that they were all added at the same time. When the Gran Siniscalco died, in 1365, or through a donation *inter vivos*, the palace became the property of the Certosa, whose coat of arms was placed on the façade (SU 391, in BU3): a trimontium between the rampant lions of the Acciaioli (Trotta 1992, p. 111).

Interpreting findings from the topo-stratigraphic analysis of standing buildings in the light of the published written sources and relevant literature has revealed a process of gradual accumulation of power and urban possessions by the Buondelmonti. This was followed by the disintegration of the lineage and a diversification in the fortunes of different nuclear families that will become even more visible in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries (Bizzocchi 1982). Such diversification significantly impacted the design of the urban environment. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, however, the process was nowhere near being complete, as shown by the fact that the Buondelmonti still owned a loggia next to the tower BU2, on the eastern side of Chiasso delle Misure. The loggia was likely built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, as suggested by the dressing of the building blocks that make up its western pillar. This is comparable to the masonry of the eastern front elevation of the Palazzo della Mercanzia which has been dated to the first half of the 1300s. A loggia expressed the ancient origin and prestige of the family to whom it belonged and was a place with strong symbolic connotations for the community (see also Buchli 2013, pp. 92-93 on public spaces and material determinism). It is therefore not surprising that it remained a shared and undivided property of the Buondelmonti for centuries, as attested by the 15<sup>th</sup>-century chronicler Benedetto Dei (Cronaca Fiorentina, p. 57; Lansing 1991, p. 57). A survey of the TU and the literature available provides further information on the developing relation of the Buondelmonti with the urban built space of the TU from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards. At the beginning of the 1400s, the wealth of the Buondelmonti was limited and fragmented, as the family only owned a few dozen land parcels located in an area between San Casciano and Tavernelle. Differently, they exercised their

ecclesiastic patronages jointly and these included the original family seat of the pieve of Santa Maria Impruneta, also referred to as '*occhio destro e onore della famiglia*'<sup>3</sup>. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the break-up of the lineage was marked and while, for example, Ainolfo di Bernardo Buondelmonti had little fortune in the 1500s, the sons of Bernardo's brother Lorenzo prospered. Between 1517 and 1543, Lorenzo's sons bought that '*palagio Vecchio e annoso*' that, in 1498, belonged to Francesco Scali (Ginori Lisci 1972, p. 134), and commissioned the completion of the new Palazzo Buondelmonti in Piazza Santa Trinita 1–3.

The seventh building phase (Phase VII) finally evidences a number of late modern and contemporary interventions. These comprise various restoration works undertaken on BU3 (SU 33 and 34, -186 and 187, -256 and 252), BU2 (SU 100 and 99, -105 and 94, -102 and 101, -143 and 88, -121 and 120, - 220 and 221) and BU1 as well as the 1930 addition of a plaque on the façade of BU2 (SU 135; fig. 10), which reads:

*Fra i vetusti monumenti della città dentro dalla cerchia antica – ricorda l'illuminata ricchezza – della repubblica fiorentina – questo*

Fig. 10. Plaque on the façade of BU2, FE1 (Photo: C. Bonacchi).



<sup>3</sup> Trans: 'right eye and pride of the family'; ASF, Regio Diritto, filza I, c. 481r (1563), cited in BIZZOCCHI 1982, p. 8.

*palazzo che a confine coi Buondelmonti e i Bonciani – eressero gli Acciaioli – principesca dimora di statisti e mercanti. (Transl. 'Amongst the ancient monuments of the city within the ancient walls – recalls the enlightened wealth – of the Florentine republic – this palace that on the border with the Buondelmonti and the Bonciani – the Acciaioli built – princely home of statesmen and merchants').*

This plaque expresses multiple and partly contrasting values. On the one hand, it foregrounds the 'enlightened wealth of the Florentine republic', a public subject. On the other, this wealth is celebrated through the palace of the Acciaioli, a private property that is described as a princely residence of statesmen and merchants. The plaque was commissioned by Luisa Burresi Pettini (Mercanti, Straffi 2003, pp. 22-23), whose family took various initiatives aimed at enhancing the medieval appearance of the palace between 1864 and 1920 (Paolini 2016a)<sup>4</sup>. The latest in a series of substantial renovations financially supported by the Pettini was directed by Ugo Giusti (Paolini 2016b), a high-profile architect active in Tuscany at the time (Maugeri 2013). Between the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the architectural culture in Florence was rather traditional, combining a form of nationalism rooted in the *Risorgimento* with localism and neomedievalism (Maugeri 2013). Less than a decade before the completion of the restoration of the palace, for example, Giusti was involved in preparing the International Exhibition of Rome, which was organised in 1911 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Kingdom of Italy. The architectural gaze was 'deliberately introverted, focussed on the historical and artistic glory of the past' (Maugeri 2013, p. 8). The 1930 plaque conveys some of these meanings by celebrating the Florentine republic together with the intellectual, political and economic greatness of one of the families that contributed to it (BU2). This very selective narrative aimed to showcase heroic models and idealized behaviours by focusing on one specific phase of the building.

Beyond this plaque, the only other layer of public interpretation of the urban environment in the TU consists of display boards that were funded by the Lions Clubs of Florence and placed in front of BU1, BU2 and the new Palace of the Buondelmonti in Piazza Santa Trinita (fig. 11). All of them provide the same very brief information on: the basic building type (tower or palace); one of the families who owned the building; a dating that in most cases seems to refer to the construction phase deemed to be most distinctive and representative; and a note

<sup>4</sup> At the time of the Napoleonic suppressions of 1808, the palace was taken from the monastery of the Certosa and sold to private owners – first to Gaspero Marchionni and, in 1864, to Giuseppe Pettini (PAOLINI 2016a). In 1901 both the palace (BU3) and the tower (BU2) appeared in the list of buildings of national artistic value compiled by the Direzione Generale delle Antichità e Belle Arti (PAOLINI 2016b).



stating that the board was donated by the Lions Clubs of Florence. This fragmentary interpretation freezes the architecture in collective memory at a specific point in time. It reinforces the idea that the urban environment is not ever-changing but temporally bounded to specific 'periods', also suggesting that past and present are disconnected entities. On-site interpretation of this kind privileges one particular viewpoint over other possible ones. By mentioning just the owners, unclear dating expressed in centuries, and elite building type, the labelling privileges private and elite values while neglecting others the architectural complex held for the community. For example, there is no mention of the commercial uses of the towers on the ground floors, or of the tension and dynamic relations between the Buondelmonti and the Florentines. There is no sense of the public service of the Buondelmonti to the communal government and how this participation in the public life of the city influenced the ways in which the family contributed to the design of the TU. Even beyond the limits of the TU, these boards aimed at interpreting residential architecture owned by high-status and recognizable families in Florence, but cannot be found for religious and public buildings. Boards such as the ones described are often used for on-site public interpretation, but the agency of their reductive nature is rarely considered.



Fig. 11. Display boards funded by the Lions Club, Florence (Photo: C. Bonacchi).

## **5. Discussion: Assessing and curating social values**

The topo-stratigraphic analysis of standing buildings provided us with evidence on how the architectural complex (AC) was created and modified over time in relation to the development of the TU and the social history of Florence. The changing functions and symbolism of the buildings impacted the community who lived in the neighbourhood. By leveraging architectural anthropology theory to support the interpretation of the results of archaeological research, we could detail how social actors worked to shape the process of urban design across centuries and the dynamics at play between ideas of 'private' and 'public' in this context (Rapoport 1990, pp. 177-183; Segaud 2010, pp. 101-103). The construction of the towers, BU1 and BU2, works to consolidate the Buondelmonti's mili-

tary strength and status within the city, projecting values corresponding to Rapoport's middle-level meanings (Rapoport 1990; Smith 2007). The creation of commercial spaces on the ground floor of BU3 moves the narrative towards a blended institutional and socio-economic relevance of the family in the service of the city. An additional level of analysis pertains to the transformation of the Buondelmonti from rural *domini loci*, to a family who migrated to the city and became part of the Florentine political and economic elite. The general compliance with the communal law regarding the height of towers, for example, is the outcome of a negotiation of public and private interests within communal Florence that prioritized 'the public' over 'the private'. The Buondelmonti however were strongly connected with institutional life at that point in time, as a result of holding key official positions. First through the towers and, subsequently, through residential buildings, the family could 'broadcast' themselves as community leaders and influencers of social values.

Taking a heritage studies approach, we could then understand how Luisa Burresi Pettini revitalized this narrative in 1930 and memorialized it through a plaque. The latter was aimed at editing the urban environment so as to highlight *Risorgimento*-like values and local traditions. It exposed citizens to examples of greatness that celebrated both the wealth of 'the public' (the Republic of Florence) and the achievements of 'leading' private families (the Acciaiuoli). In contrast, we showed how the display boards commissioned by the Lions Clubs of Florence had the effect, however unwittingly, of removing the public contribution of the families who erected the buildings. The boards work to set a fixed idea of time that prioritizes the celebration of the wealthy elite at a selected point in time. These ideologically charged aspects of modern and contemporary operations of public interpretation could not have been assessed, however, without a joint approach combining archaeology and heritage to investigate the transforming social values of the neighbourhood from medieval times to the present.

What actions are acceptable to address exclusive kinds of memorialization today? We argue that public interpretations foregrounding certain semantics of the urban space over others should be revisited to acknowledge the existence of multiple viewpoints and positions. Historical memorializations are an essential part of the life and history of a city. Hence, it is important to maintain the 1930 plaque, critically explained and challenged, while integrating the meanings that the displays funded by the Lions Clubs of Florence have omitted. Leveraging both building archaeology and heritage studies is useful to guarantee an inclusive documentation of the social values embedded in surviving architecture. We maintain that 'integrating' rather than 'removing' should be a key principle in critical curation, applicable to other urban palimpsests in Italy and elsewhere in Europe, including those that are associated with more painful histories. The Buondelmonti case study well represents the difficulties of negotiating between multiple values of urban built environments in the *longue durée*. Regardless of how

tragic the history of an urban built environment might be, it is paramount to preserve it critically. The contemporary memorialization of space does not equate with history, but history has happened through the memorialization of space. Our present is tightly connected to that past.

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## Abstract

This article illustrates an approach that draws on topo-stratigraphic building archaeology, architectural anthropology and heritage studies to assess transforming social values of urban built heritage in the *longue durée*. These three research traditions are closely related, but often pursued for the study of urban environments at the exclusion of each other. Here we discuss the value of their joint implementation through the analysis of a specific case study, a neighbourhood in the city of Florence (11<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> centuries). We argue that the proposed approach enables a more in-depth understanding of and negotiation between the variable meanings emerging from the relationships between people, architecture and urban space. In this way, it aids the contemporary critical curation of 'deep cities'.

**Keywords:** building archaeology, heritage, architectural anthropology, urban transformations, curating 'deep cities'

*Questo articolo illustra un approccio basato su archeologia dell'architettura topo-stratigrafica, antropologia dell'architettura e heritage studies per valutare la trasformazione dei valori sociali del patrimonio culturale urbano in una prospettiva di lunga durata. Queste tre discipline sono strettamente legate, ma di frequente applicate singolarmente allo studio dell'ambiente urbano. Viene qui discusso il valore di una loro applicazione congiunta attraverso l'analisi di un caso studio, un quartiere di Firenze (XI-XXI secolo). Questo approccio permette una comprensione più profonda e una negoziazione tra i differenti significati che emergono dalle relazioni tra persone, architetture e spazio urbano. In tal modo si facilita la gestione contemporanea delle "deep cities".*

**Parole chiave:** archeologia dell'architettura, patrimonio, antropologia dell'architettura, trasformazioni urbane, gestione delle "deep cities"

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