

Bringing Neighbourhoods to Life in Medieval Vienna

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In 1448 the inhabitants of the Widmer Quarter – one of the four districts of late medieval Vienna and including areas within and without the city walls – were listed for tax purposes. Unusually, this list, now in the Austrian National Library, includes not only the owners of each house plot, but also other men (tenants, employees...) and occasionally women (widows) living there. The plots are grouped in neighbourhoods, some of which are identifiable today. It has proved possible to identify the routes which the men compiling the list took through the district.

Some areas can now be reconstructed in great detail. The house plots can be reconstructed on the basis of the accurate city map by Werner Arnold Steinhausen (1710), tempered with information from the maps by Wolmuet (1547), Suttinger (1684) and others. Numerous archaeological projects, including major excavations, which have taken place in the area, enable us to further adapt the street plan and even some house plans. The 1448 list can be compared to other contemporary lists compiled for tax and other purposes, to the plot-by-plot study of house owners and property transfers compiled by Paul Harrer in the mid-twentieth century, an unpublished work held in the City Archives, and to the results of more recent historical work.

Thus it is proving possible to place dozens of householders and other people on the plots on which they lived. The area can be a Viennese test case for the GIS-powered connection of textual data to plot maps, as pioneered in other cities and exposing the social-spatial structure of the city in the later medieval period. The possibilities for historians, archaeologists, museum professionals and others interested in the Middle Ages are considerable.

Key words:

Vienna, Medieval and Archaeology, Taxation, House Owners and Tenants, GIS.

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The Oldest Tax List of Vienna (1448)

The manuscript codex 13.959 at the Austrian National Library contains a ten-folio long list of homeowners and other residents of a Viennese district (Fig. 1) [Unterkircher 1971, 154]. *Lignorum Anno xlviii* is written on Folio 1r of the list, referring to 1448 and the Widmerviertel (Widmer District). The name of this district comes from the Latin *Porta Lignorum* (Latin *lignum* = Old High German, *wit* = wood) and calls to mind the wood (wood charcoal) market (Witmarkt) near the town gate. A nineteenth-century description of the manuscript's content can be found on the front cover page: *List of homes in the vicinity of the "Holztor" (Wood Gate) in Vienna from 1448, gifted to the Imperial and Royal Court Library by Theodor Georg von Karajan, Vienna, October 17, 1853*. How the manuscript landed in the hands of the well-known Viennese scholar – Custos of the Court Library, Professor of German Language and Literature at the University of Vienna, member of the Frankfurt Parliament and the Austrian House of Lords – is unknown [Czeike 1973]. In the manuscript index, the title reads: *Album germanicum domuum earumque possessorum et inquilinorum quartae partis quondam urbis Vindobonensis*. This Latin title accurately describes the content of the manuscript.

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The manuscript has a small-folio format of 14 cm (width) x 40.5 cm (height) with a text area of approximately 10 x 36 cm. The sheet of paper used was thus 28 x 40.5 cm, which meant that it belonged to the type of format known as Kanzleifolio (chancery paper) that was widely used in the fifteenth century. It is possible that the paper was trimmed before use, as the Kanzleifolio format was usually 32 x 45 cm [Needham 1994, 125, 127-129]. The paper is thick and coarse, the grain can be seen in many places and there are no watermarks anywhere [Schultz and Follmer 2015]. Fol. 1 and Fol. 10 served as the original covers of the manuscript. In between these folios is a quaternio, a gathering of four folios. The binding between Fol. 5v and 6r is easily visible. A hard cover now encases the gathering and paper cover of the manuscript, although this was not added until a later point in time. It is likely that the manuscript originally consisted of two gatherings, and the inner gathering was simply lost at an unknown period in time.

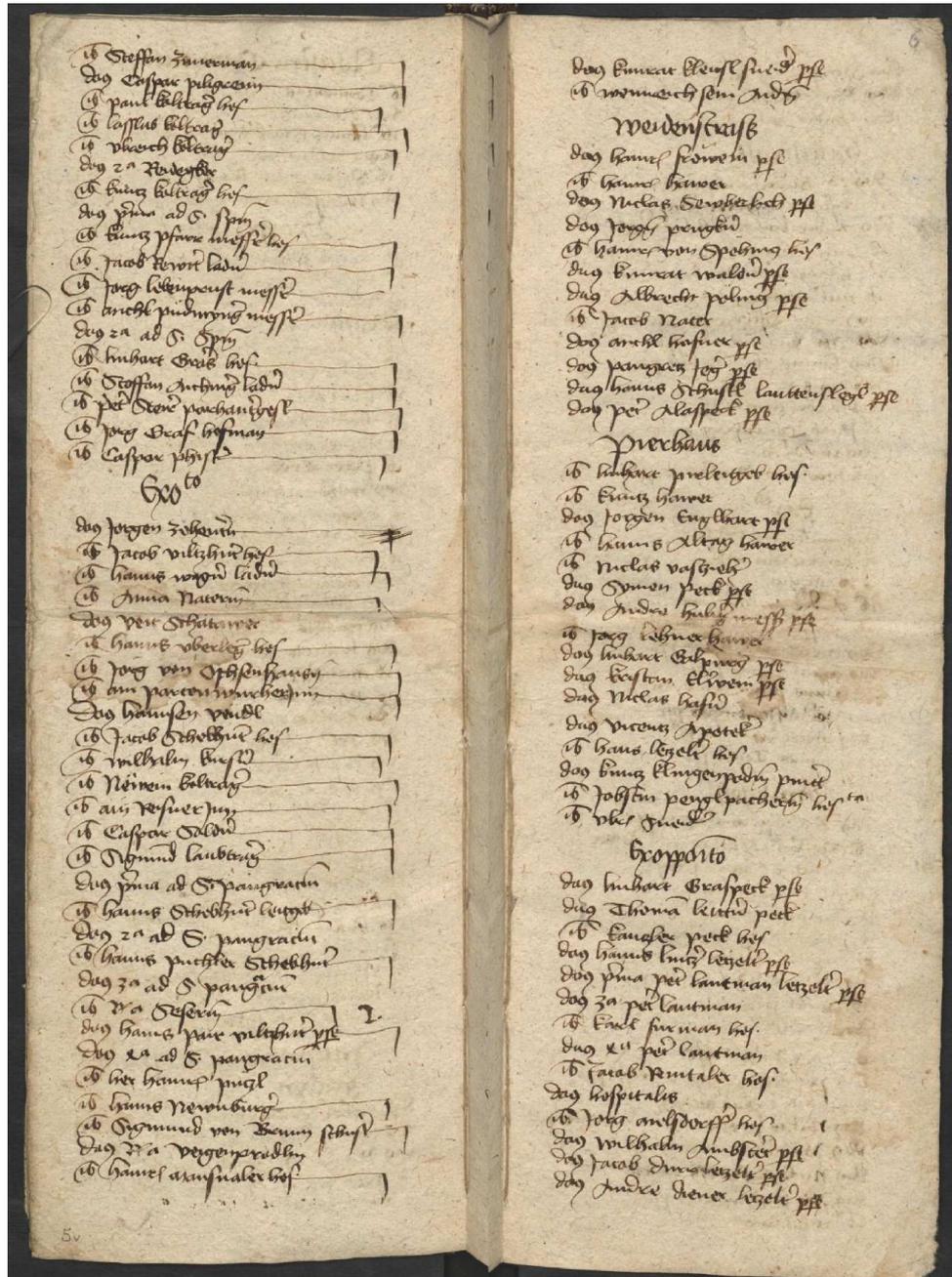


Fig. 1. Manuscript 13.959 of the Austrian National Library, Fol. 5v und 6r (Centre of the Gathering).

Folio 2r to Folio 10r list the names of the homeowners in a column, with each homeowner's name followed by the names of the residents renting in that home. The list is organized topographically by street, and the streets are then identified by rubrics (cf. Fig. 1, right, Fol. 6r: *Weidenstrass*, *Pierhaus* and *Ex opposito*). Additional information is not provided. Until the middle of the gathering at Fol. 5v, the scribe filled the blank lines after the persons' names with a horizontal line that ends in a check mark. The manuscript was originally folded in the middle and was preserved in this format (20.25 x 14 cm). The fold left a dark coloration on most of the sheets, as well as additional holes on the outside sheets (Fol. 1, 2 and 8-10). Folio 1 and 10 have been refurbished and completed. The list was likely written by one hand. The script is a late medieval chancery hand that is easy to read. Towards the end of the text, the script becomes a bit smaller, and the number of lines per sheet increases (Fol. 4r: 48 lines with a heading; Fol. 7v: 50 lines with a heading). The horizontal text area also becomes more irregular towards the end of the text.

The list has not yet been analysed by urban history researchers [Oppl 1993, 8]. One of the "registers of the names of the 1448 tax assessment in the Widmerviertel in the Vienna City Archive" mentioned by Ferdinand Oppl is currently unable to be found [Oppl 1993, 17]. Its function seemed to have been clarified after Otto Brunner described the text in his pivotal monograph on the finances of the city of Vienna in the Middle Ages as follows: "Of the tax lords' official documents, there is only one single document remaining to us from the time before 1500 which can be attributed to them with some degree of probability: a list of the residents of the Widmerviertel from 1448 that provides a list of names organized by street, without any additional references to the tax payments. The fact that it is a tax book can be seen from its layout, as it matches the later tax books which list the inhabitants house by house" [Brunner 1929, 69; Vogeler 2003, 171].

Sources from the early modern period have shown that the Viennese Council had had "tax assessments" enacted for the collection of the city tax since the second half of the fourteenth century at the latest [Baltzarek 1971; Rausch 1965]. These lists included all taxpayers with the respective taxes they had to pay. In preparing these assessments, the tax collectors, always using the same schema, listed the heads of the households for the city district assigned to them and determined the individual tax burdens, which were based on a self-assessment completed by the residents. Otto Brunner may therefore be correct in his assumption that the 1448 list of houses is the oldest preserved "official document of the tax lords" for the Widmerviertel [Ertl forthcoming].

We intend to use this list to discuss socio-historical, archaeological and urban development and to illustrate the idea that biographical sources of this type can be interpreted particularly well within the framework of an interdisciplinary collaboration [Falk and Hammel 1986].

GIS MAPPING OF MEDIEVAL HOUSEHOLDS

GIS is a useful instrument to illustrate complex issues in a spatial context. You are able to display data and its qualities in different ways, including the results of queries and selections of data. In this respect the tax list of 1448 is a perfect opportunity to begin the multifunctional mapping of households of medieval Vienna. We began by transforming a previously-prepared comprehensive database into an elaborate GIS system. This database is based on the transcription of the original document and the processing of its data and contains all available information about persons and locations from the tax list as names, civil status, professions, description of site, ownership or tenants. To create an appropriate GIS linked with such a database you need suitable maps. The modern digital grid plan of Vienna (<https://www.wien.gv.at/ma41/datenviewer/public/start.aspx>), provided by the Vienna city surveying department (MA 41) is the basis of all further mapping and ensures the identification of mapped medieval ground-plans within the modern city. Identifying medieval houses is difficult, because there are only few prominent traces of medieval Vienna in the present town. One approach involves the georeferencing of the more accurate old maps. A plan, which has proved suitable for this purpose is that of the inner city drawn by Werner Arnold Steinhausen in 1710 (Wien Museum Inv.-Nr. HMW 105500/1-14). When overlaying this map on the modern grid map you get a high degree of accuracy [Mosser 2012, 22]. Although this plan is nearly three centuries younger than the tax list of 1448, it shows in the inner city at least in many places still unchanged medieval plot structures. However, you have to keep in mind the impact of the completely different fortifications built in the 16th century and of other building projects from the same period such as the Jesuit College or the municipal armoury on the square Am Hof.

On this basis it was possible to start first mappings. As mentioned the tax list of 1448 contains households from the Widmer Quarter from within as well as without the town walls of the 15th century. The outline of the Widmer Quarter inside the walls has been reconstructed in the Historical Atlas of Vienna (http://mapire.eu/oesterreichischer-staedteatlas/wien/view/wien_08.ecw/?zoom=1&lat=-3837&lon=2604&layers=B) and was digitalized into the GIS

map. The identified households are limited to the northern parts of the Widmer Quarter, the southern part is missing in the list, but we know from similar tax lists from later centuries (see above) that there was a traditional topographical order in the sequence of the houses visited in the inner city which reflects the routes taken by the tax officials. The first of these known paths leads through the former Jewish Quarter, which was disbanded in 1420/21 some years before the writing of the tax list [Lohrmann 2000]. The second route follows the street Tuchlauben southwards, the third one skirts the former high medieval town wall in the west and the south and the last one follows certain streets in the southern part of the Widmer Quarter (Fig. 2).

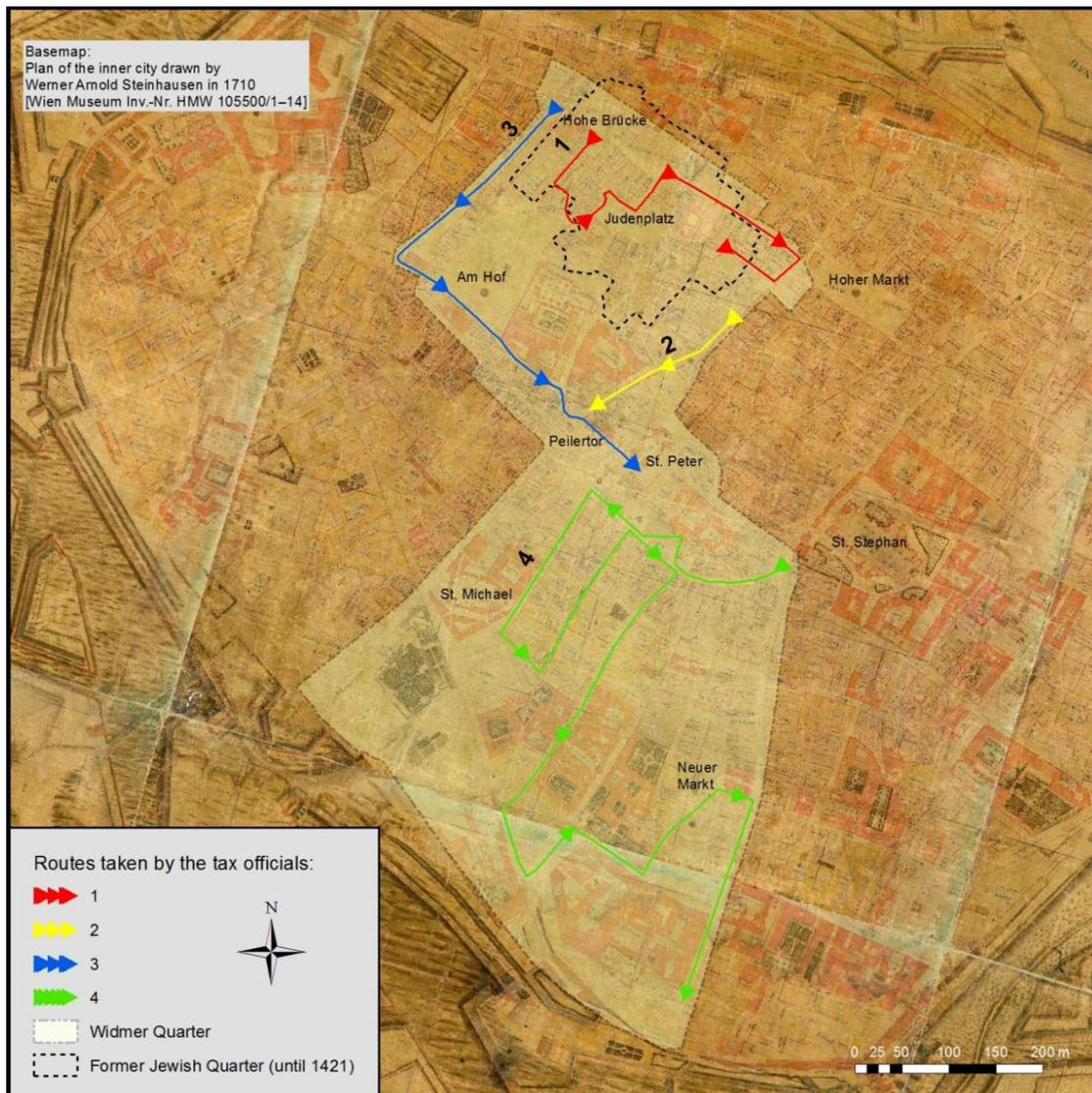


Fig. 2. Vienna, Widmer Quarter: Routes taken by the tax officials.

Focussing on the area of identified households it should be noticed that we are able to map by no means all the listed plots. And there will be always discussions about accuracy. But the first results are promising. In the following some examples which can be displayed on maps using GIS:

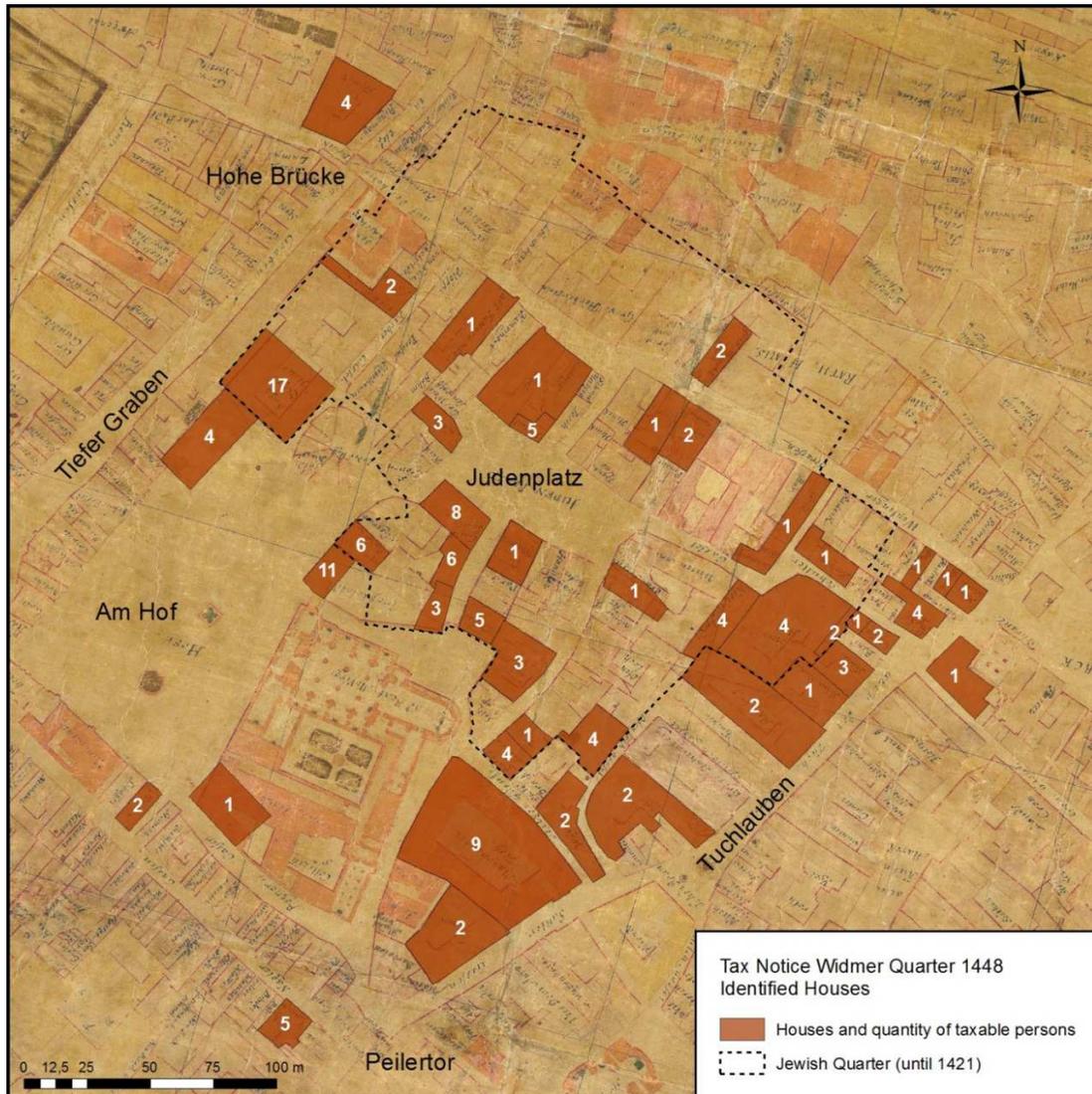


Fig. 3. Vienna, Widmer Quarter: Identified houses and number of taxable persons (Basemap: Plan of the inner city drawn by Werner Arnold Steinhausen in 1710, Wien Museum Inv.-Nr. HMW105500/1–14).

(Fig. 3) A first map shows the houses identified up to now and their respective number of taxable persons. In the background is the dotted outline of the former Jewish Quarter and of the confiscated houses inside of it [Schwarz 1909]. Other selections enable the highlighting of the houses where the members of the town council lived or the habitations with other respected burghers from the Widmer Quarter in 1459, the so called “Genannten” (burghers with full electoral rights) (Fig. 4). The list includes the male taxable persons with the exception of the widows of deceased householders and tenants. Their number per house can be illustrated as well as for example the owners themselves with their names.

However, there is a lot of information which goes far beyond the limited area shown. One could include the data from the suburbs outside the medieval town wall, but the localisation of a series of place names from there is difficult or nearly impossible. The Widmer suburb itself can be identified as an area outside the wall in front of the Widmer Gate near the Hofburg between the Wien River in the south and the so-called Ottakringer Bach in the north. A suitable map basis is the digital elevation model of Vienna together with the reconstructed medieval town wall [Krause 2013] with the present day city map in the background. Some place names mentioned in the tax list can be mapped with a degree of accuracy, others cannot yet be identified at the moment and no single household could be isolated in this area at all, but it is obviously very promising to compare the existing data from this area with that of

the quarter within the city. For example, the completely different ratio between proprietors and tenants inside and outside the wall is demonstrable (Fig. 5), reflecting the higher demand for and concentration of housing space in the city.

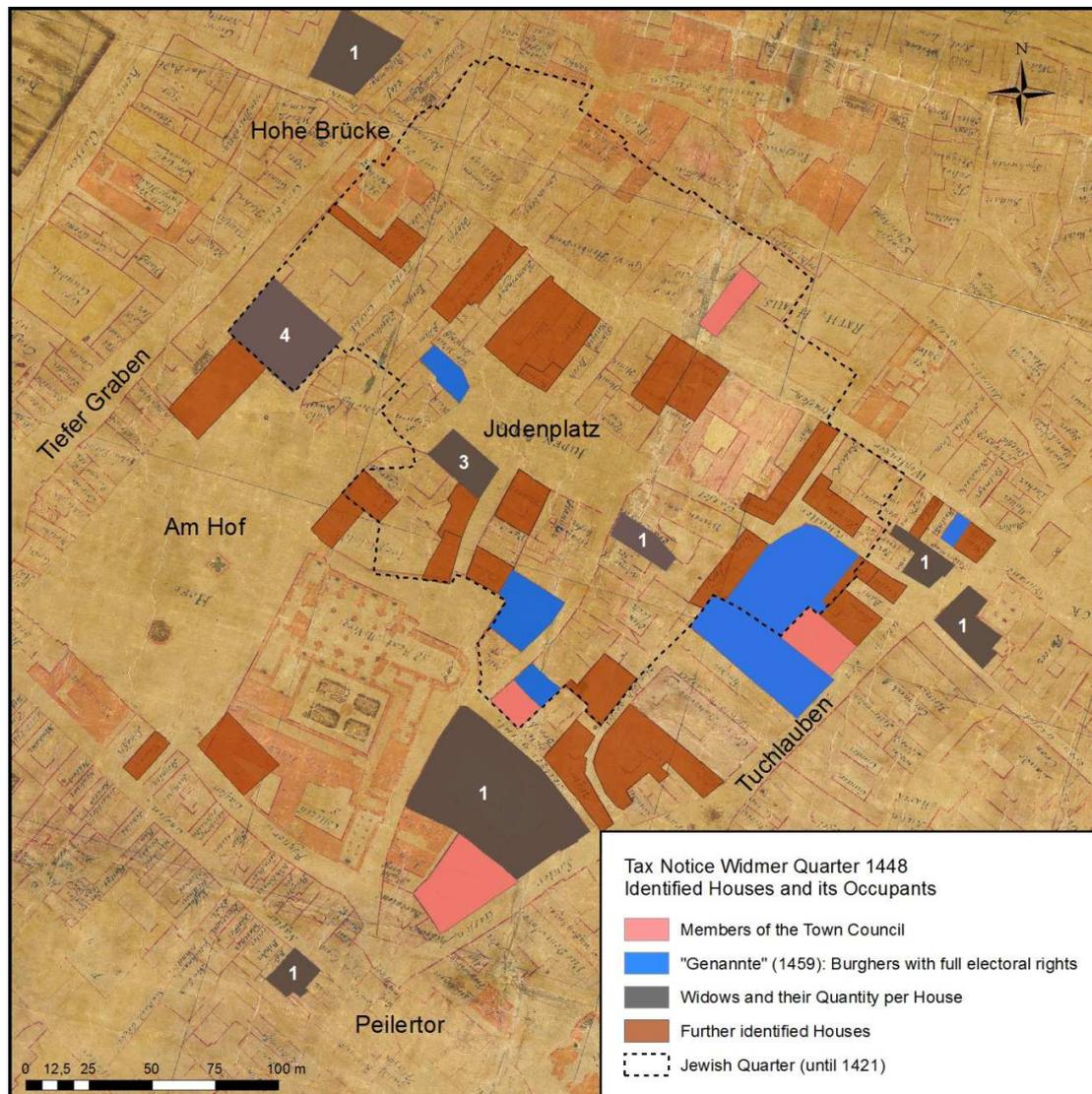


Fig. 4. Vienna, Widmer Quarter: Identified houses and some of its occupants (Basemap: Plan of the inner city drawn by Werner Arnold Steinhausen in 1710, Wien Museum Inv.-Nr. HMW105500/1–14).

A further instructive example is the mapping of the distribution of certain professions mentioned in the list (Fig. 6). The great variety of medieval occupations in the city, such as tailors, carpenters, stone masons, shoe makers and others is immediately apparent. By contrast a strong predomination of winegrowers can be observed in the suburb, especially at a greater distance from the city wall.

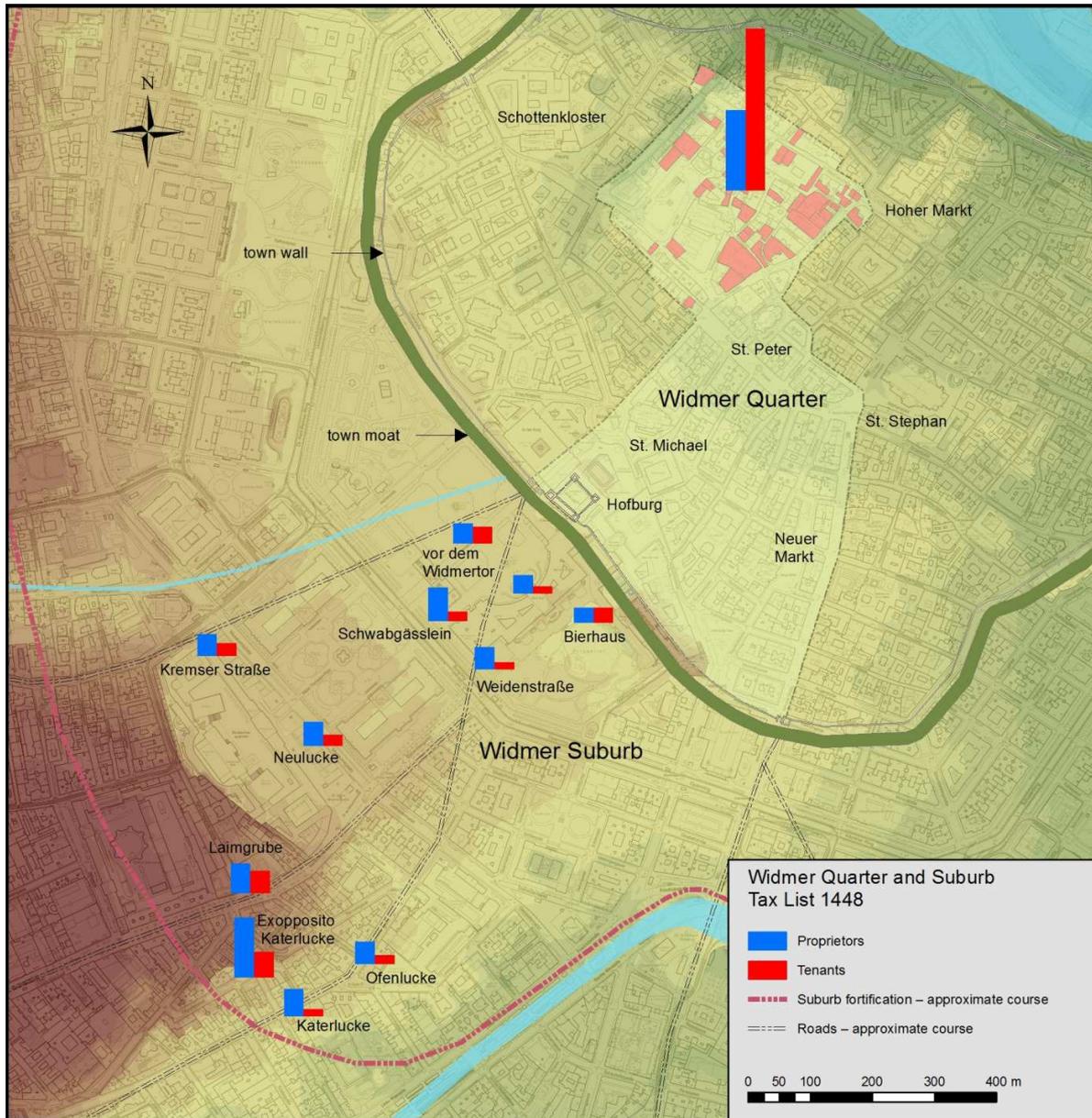


Fig. 5. Vienna, Widmer Quarter and Suburb: Ratio between proprietors and tenants inside and outside the wall (Basemap: Raster map and DEM of Vienna: MA 14 – ADV, MA 41 – City Surveying Department).

Summarizing first results it must be concluded that the GIS based mapping of medieval households can illustrate all kinds of social phenomena in medieval Vienna, often in a much easier way than scientific discourses are able to do. It is also an important supporting tool for research.

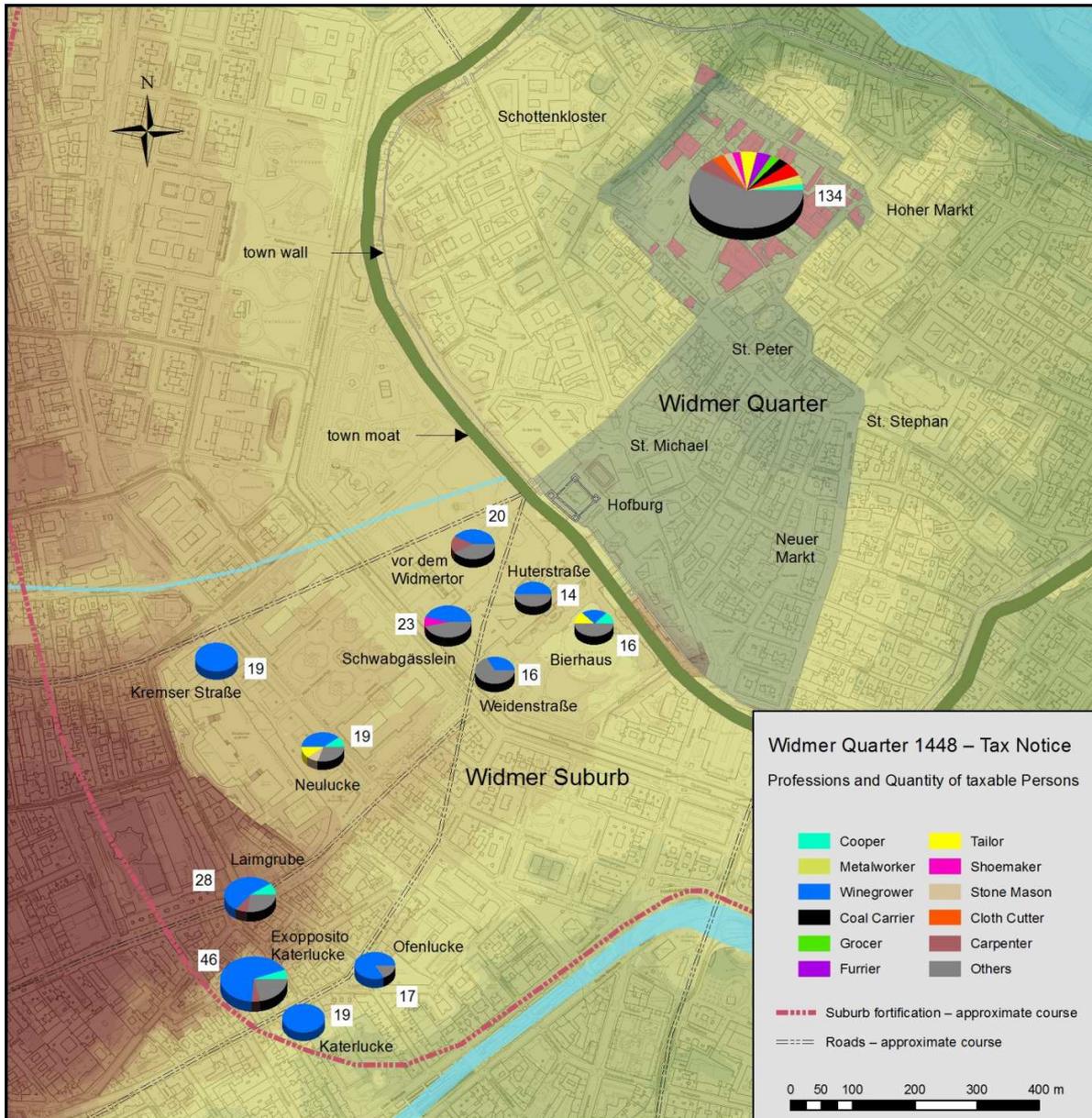


Fig. 6. Vienna, Widmer Quarter and Suburb 1448: Professions inside and outside the wall. (Basemap: Raster map and DEM of Vienna: MA 14 – ADV, MA 41 – City Surveying Department).

A GROUP OF PROPERTIES IN THE CENTRE OF THE DISTRICT

A group of properties in the centre of the district and on the southern edge of the Jewish quarter before its destruction in 1420 serves as an example of how, starting from the 1448 list, a detailed reading of the property records and buildings archaeology can be used to draw the former town plan more accurately, to correct assumptions made on the basis of only a few sources and to tie as many householders and tenants to individual properties as possible. The text case area is a block of today four, historically five properties, which are bounded by the streets and squares *Am Hof*, *Drahtgasse*, *Judenplatz*, *Parisergasse* and *Schulhof*. The southern house was original two buildings, one facing westwards, one to the east.

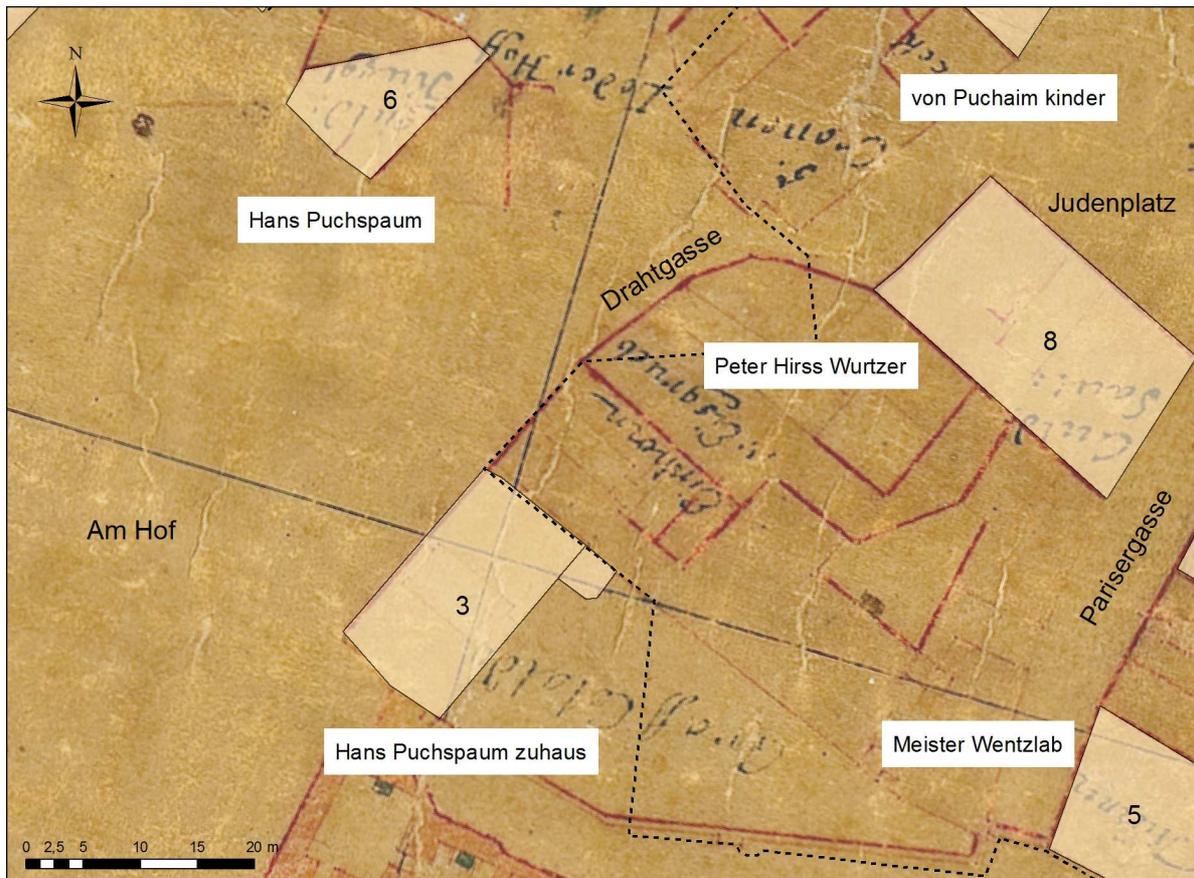


Fig. 7. The test case area in the town plan of 1710 with the initial attribution of names (Basemap: Plan of the inner city drawn by Werner Arnold Steinhausen in 1710 (Wien Museum Inv.-Nr. HMW105500/1–14).

This is the first attempt at placing names from 1448 in this area (Fig. 7), based largely on the opinion of Paul Harrer, who compiled a plot-by-plot study of house owners and property transfers in the mid-twentieth century, an unpublished work held today in the City Archives [Harrer-Lucienfeld 1951-1958]. As you can see a man called *Peter Hirss* can be tied to the northernmost property, while two properties owned by *Hanns Puchspawm* were initially placed on either side of the *Drahtgasse*, one of them in the south-western house. Two other neighbouring houses are shown here. The order in which these names appear in the 1448 list is: The children i.e. the heirs of *Herr von Puchaim* – *Heinrich von Esslingen*, not localised here – *Peter Hirss* – *Hanns Puchspawm*, an annex (*zuhaus*), his first building – *Hanns Puchspawm*'s second house – and Master *Wentzlab*'s house (*Wenceslaus*), who appears to have an entrepreneur in the building industry. It is thus immediately clear that the first attempt has produced an unlikely zigzag route. There is also no mention in the 1448 list of a householder between *Peter Hirss* and *Hanns Puchspawm*, although there are one or two properties between their houses.

There has been considerable archaeology in this area, most of it buildings archaeology, allowing us to reconstruct large chunks of the houses and the property boundaries. The three southern houses were analysed systematically between 2001 and 2006 [Buchinger et al 2002; Buchinger et al 2008]. There are many architectural highlights in this block including an early 13th century tower, which was originally part of the Duke's palace, an entirely intact 15th century vaulted cellar room and not least two seating niches in the entry passage of the south-eastern house. Two important points emerge, however: Firstly, the northern property was originally substantially larger. Secondly, the property boundaries today essentially still go back to the medieval period, although there is substantial uncertainty in the backyard area.

Günther Buchinger was responsible for the written source material in these projects. He realised that Harrer had wrongly placed the two historic houses, which are now part of one southern property, in the Southwest, completely ignoring the former south-eastern property. Harrer did not have the benefit of archaeological data about the

impressive medieval house on *Parisergasse*. Harrer's two owners in the west were *Hanns Warnhauer* and *Hanns Puchspawm*. In fact, *Hans Puchspawm* can be placed in the southeast. This becomes clear on reading the 15th century sources, which describe the local topography. In one such extract, the location of a house, which *Heinrich the Swabian* (another name for *Heinrich von Esslingen*) bought in 1437 is described in detail [Buchinger et al 2002, 413]. It faced onto the Hof (*Am Hof*), bordered *Peter Hirss's* house on one side, i.e. there was no independent property in-between, and on the other side *Ulrich Warnhofer's* house, the father of *Hanns Warnhauer*, and on the cemetery of the Carmelite order. At the back it included an annex (*zuhaus*) on *Parisergasse*, specifically between the *Hirss* house and the so-called brick house, which we know from other sources belonged to *Hanns Puchspawm*.

Realigining the attributions on the basis of these insights means, that we can now follow our list from 1448 through the neighbourhood more exactly and plausibly (fewer zigzags!).

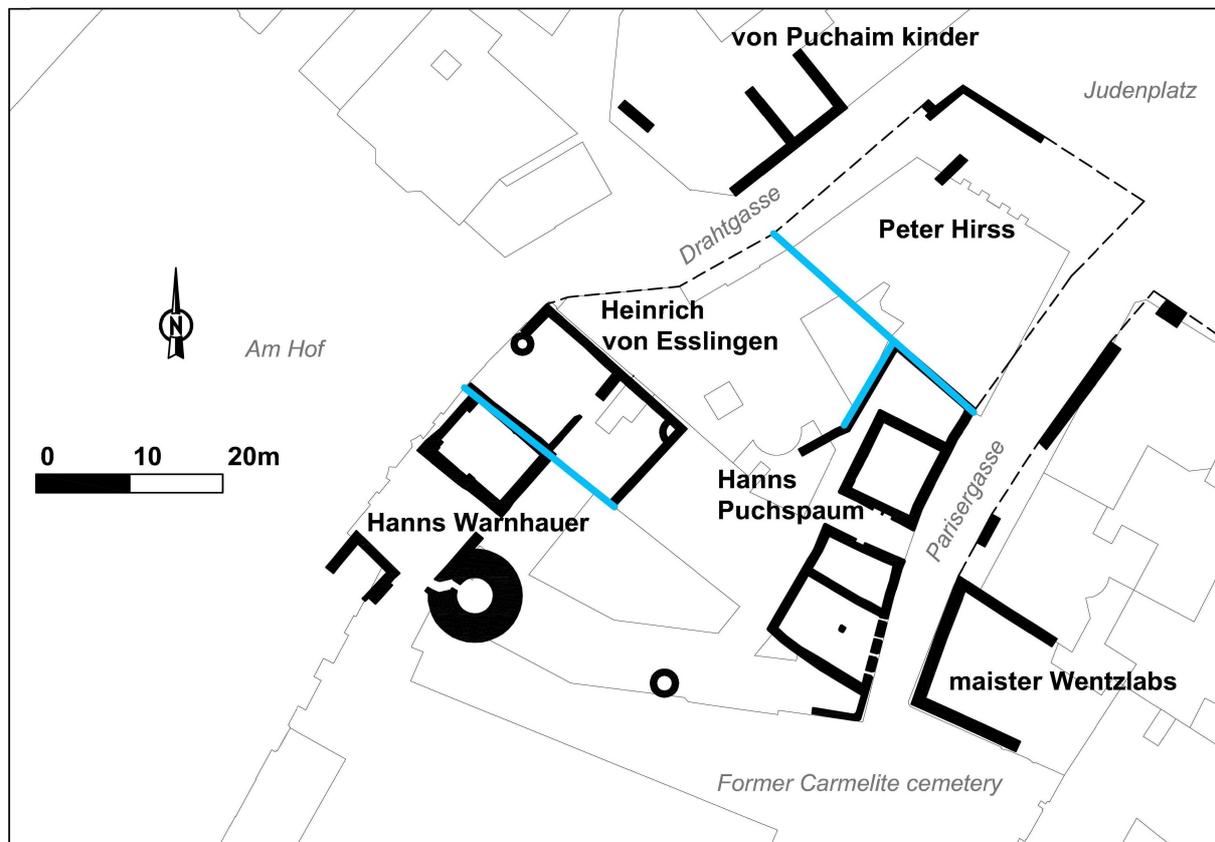


Fig. 8. The test case area in the 15th century with the revised attribution of names.

From the heirs of *Herr von Puchaim* to *Heinrich von Esslingen* to *Peter Hirss* to both properties of *Hanns Puchspawm*, side by side on *Parisergasse*, and on to *Wentzlab's* house. The first of *Hanns Puchspawm's* two properties is called an annex (*zuhaus*), presumably it is the annex that had belonged to *Heinrich von Esslingen* in 1437. *Hanns Warnhauer* crops up in the 1448 list at a much later point. His property was listed on a different day among those houses which face on to *Am Hof*.

Thus, we have four householders in this block in 1448 on properties, which are medium to large by Viennese standards (Fig. 8). They all had tenants and interestingly none of the tenants followed occupations similar to those of the four property owners. That is, they were not relatives or journeymen, but instead people who rented rooms or parts of houses. Among these 29 people are no less than 3 cutlers and 6 men who worked in the processing of animal hides. These trades were associated with the area in the late medieval and early modern periods. These 29 tenants, their combined families perhaps consisting of more than a hundred people, rented from four men whose income must in no small part have been made up of that rent.

CONCLUSION

We have thus demonstrated the potential of the 1448 tax list as a starting point for research and also the uses of GIS in its analysis. At this stage the complete allocation of names in the tax register to a street or house block is not yet feasible. It is our aim with further research to complete that mapping as comprehensively as possible. Nevertheless, there are already several other sections of late medieval Vienna, where, by starting with the 1448 list and by combining written sources and archaeology, we can achieve a high level of detail and local knowledge. It will be possible to reconstruct entire medieval neighbourhoods. Part of our task in the next period will be hammering out the questions we want to ask from the massive database now emerging.

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