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The Networks of the German Art Community in Florence, Italy, 1933-1945

Does it make sense to use Historical Network Research methods in this project?

The project

My research focus is historical art market studies and provenance research. The aim of provenance research is to reconstruct an object's history of ownership. I focus on the basic research, i.e. the persons behind these transactions. I want to know: Who was in contact with whom? Who was where and when? Who worked together? Who bought what from whom? Who collected what?

For my thesis I want to explore the Florentine art community with focus on German emigrees, especially artists, art dealers, collectors and art historians and their connections and networks in Florence during the Nazi regime (1933-1945).

Why Nodegoat?

- Serves as a database for the collected information
- Allows linking/connecting information
- Visualization of timelines
- Flexibility in visualizations

My questions and doubts

- My dataset is small and manually entered.
  - Is that a valid basis for network research and can it be more than just a visualization?
  - How do I handle biases if the archival material contains more on specific persons or institutions than others?
- How do I handle the difference between emigrated persons and locals?
- How do I handle unknown dates or time periods (e.g. time of stay in Florence vs. time of affiliation to an institution/time of meeting a person)?
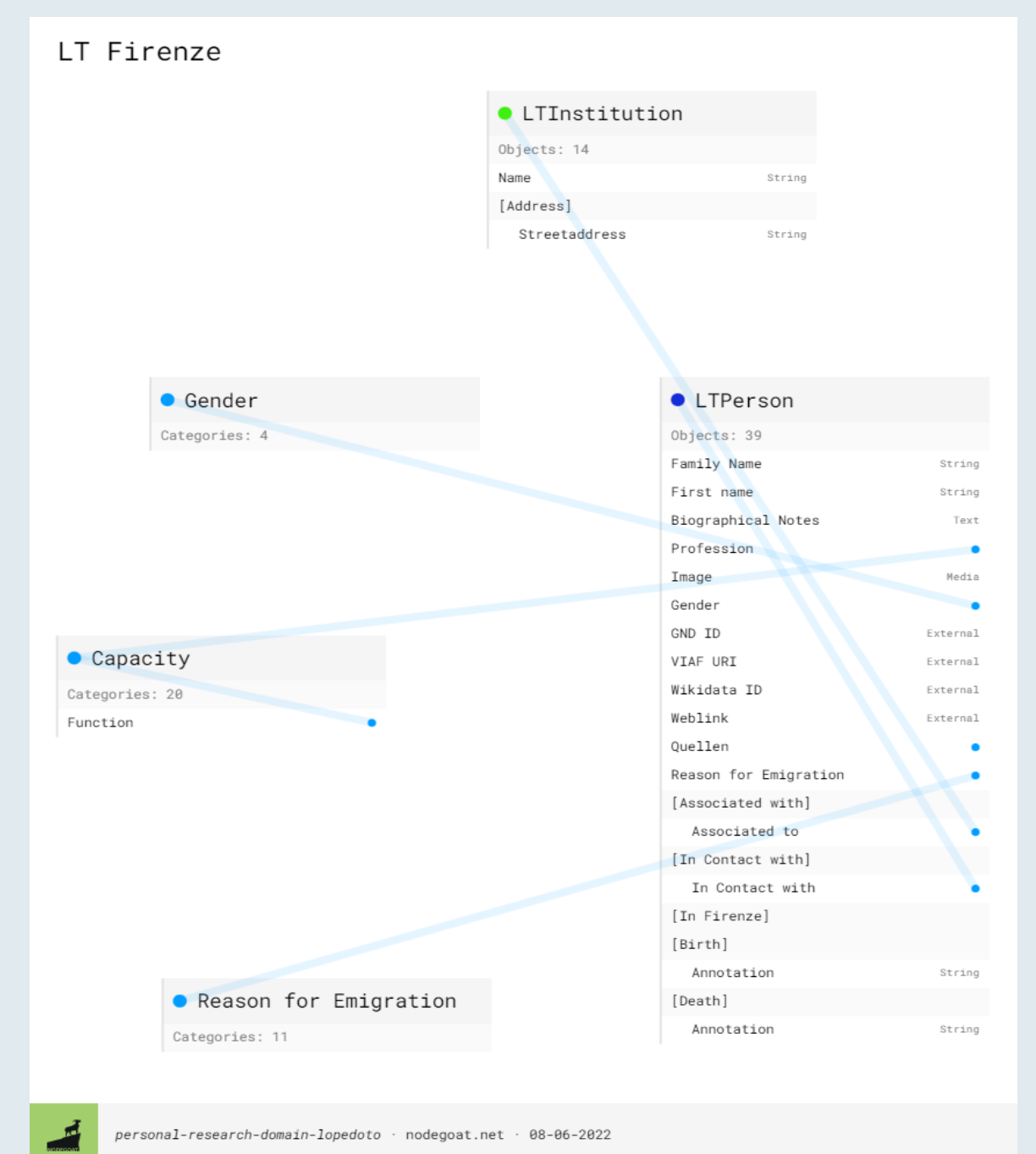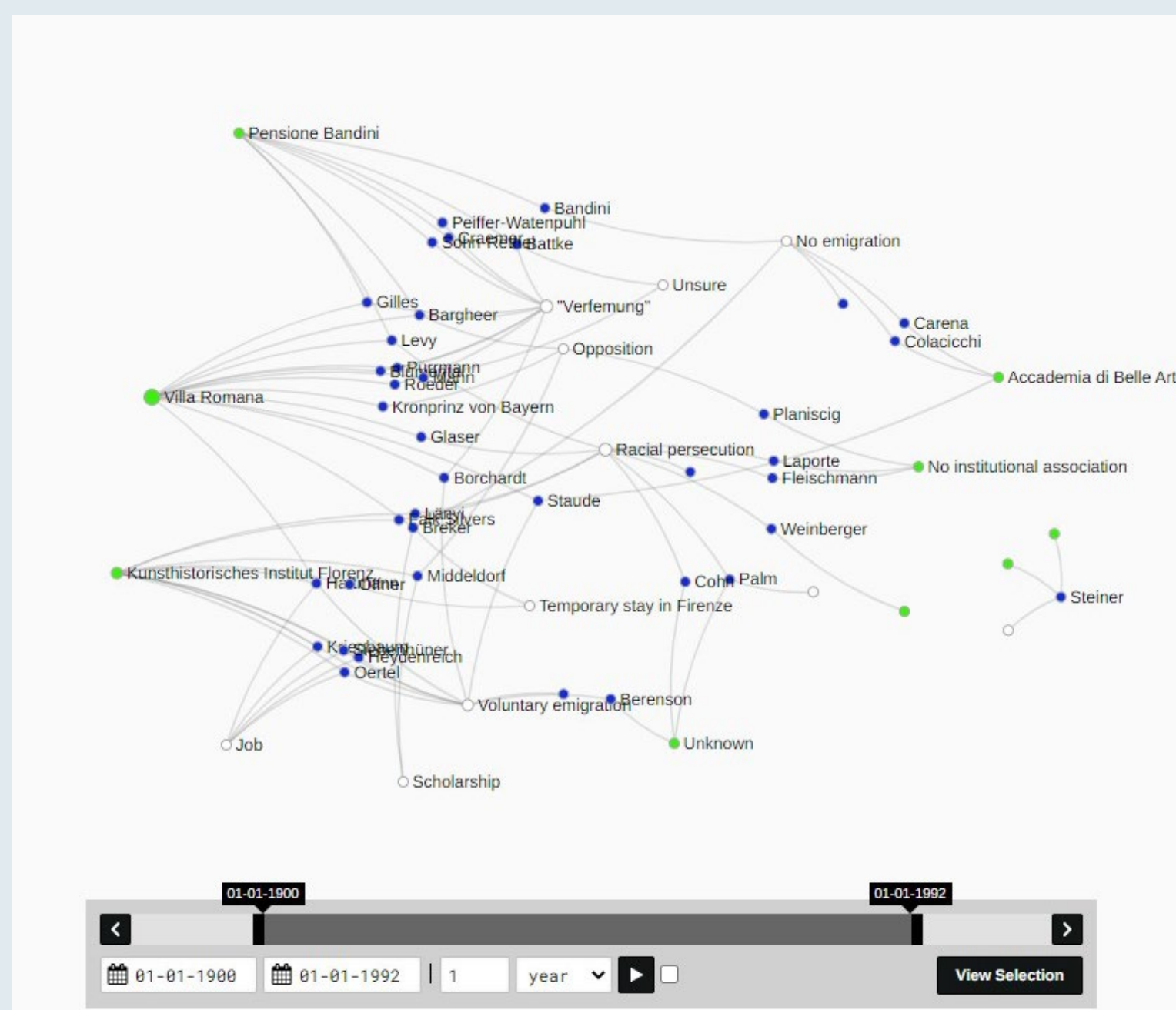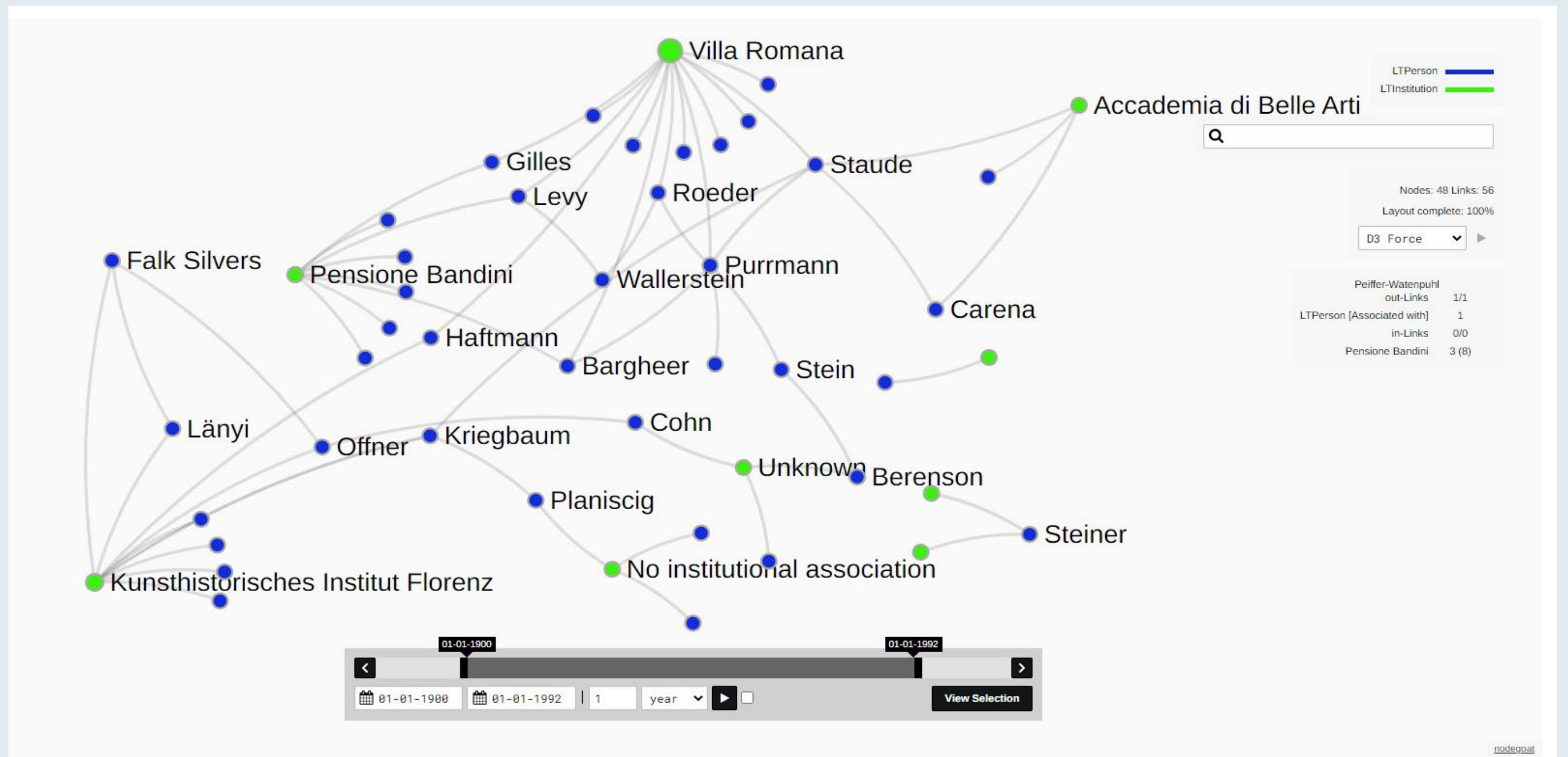
Screenshots from my Nodegoat project: Connections persons to institutions and among persons (upper row); Connections persons to institutions and reasons for emigration (lower left); data model (lower right)

ℹ Why emigrate to Italy/Florence in 1933-1945?

- German fascination for Italy („Sehnsuchtsland")
- Fascism was racist but not antisemitic in the beginning
- Initially entering Italy was possible without visa & valuables could be imported
  - 1936 Berlin-Rome-Axis hardened
  - 1938 start of antisemitic legislation
- Few official restrictions on artistic expression
- Important German institutions are in Florence (Kunsthistorisches Institut, Villa Romana)
- Florence is not Rome → government farther away

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HeiCAD Lightning Talks, 24.6.2022
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