Beyond the Horizon: Visualizing and Interpreting Networks in Early Modern Europe

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Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to introduce the project *Beyond the Horizon: Visualization and Interpretation of Networks in Early Modern Europe* which employs an interdisciplinary approach to deepen the study of travel history during the early modern period. This interdisciplinary research focuses on educational journeys, such as Grand Tours undertaken by elites, examining space-time dynamics, social relationships, and the transfer of knowledge.

An integral part of this project is the management and visualization of spatial data. Historical records were geocoded and incorporated into a geodatabase that forms the base for the building and designing an interactive web map application to bring these journeys to life in digital space. In order to visualise historical travel networks and validate their use in practice, a combination of pragmatic resources and personal documents were integrated. These included travel guides and postal manuals, as well as ego-document such as *album amicorum*.

The presentation will showcase the methodology behind geocoding and visualizing these networks and demonstrate how spatial data and web map applications enhance our understanding of the infrastructure and reception of travel in early modern Europe. This work exemplifies the value of combining digital tools with historical inquiry, offering innovative approaches to visualizing complex historical networks. It parallels with similar recent initiatives, such as the *Viabundus* project (Holterman et al., 2024) or the research on itineraries and early modern spatial networks (Midura, 2020; Midura, 2021). However, a distinctive feature of the presented project is its systematic incorporation of ego-documents.

References:

Bart Holterman et al. (ed.), *Viabundus Pre-modern Street Map 2* (released 2025), https://www.viabundus.eu.

Midura, R. (2020). *Early modern digital itineraries: Modeling European place and space, 1545–1747.* Virtual DH2020 Conference. https://doi.org/10.17613/qv7a-9c33

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