

Mapping Early Modern Mobility: From Fragmentary Sources to Spatial Patterns

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Abstract:

Mobility in early modern Europe is increasingly studied through digital humanities approaches (e.g. Hojda & Chodějovská, 2014; Kubeš, 2013), however, its cartographic representation remains methodologically challenging due to fragmented and heterogeneous sources. Grand Tours represent one of the best-documented types of elite mobility and provide a valuable basis for analysing broader spatial patterns. This paper builds on the project *Beyond the Horizon: Visualization and Interpretation of Networks in Early Modern Europe* and shifts the focus from individual narrative reconstructions towards a comparative and method-driven cartographic analysis of multiple journeys.

The study employs a three-phase system to categorise Grand Tours, which reflects changes in socio-political and cultural conditions: (1) cca 1590–1620: long-distance and long-term journeys (including Italy, Spain, England), confessional plurality; (2) 1620–1710: restricted mobility shaped by war and confessional unification resulting in shorter travels focused on Italy, France, and the Low Countries; (3) 1710–1750: shorter, more structured travels; increasing importance of French cultural space and legal education. (Cerman 2004, 2010; Chodějovská & Hojda, 2017; Verhoeven et al., 2017; Kubeš, 2018)

To reflect the varying quality of historical evidence, we propose a three-level classification of sources:

A – well-documented travels (based on ego-documents; e.g. Johann Christian and Johann Seyfried Eggenberg)

B – partially documented travels (derived from less complete or fragmentary ego-documents; e.g. Humprecht Johann Czernin)

C – sparsely documented mobility (inferred from indirect references in ego-documents, e.g. correspondence or alba amicorum)

For categories B and C, where the available evidence is incomplete or indirect, we apply the Matching Page to Path approach developed within the project. This method uses systematic provenance research to assign specific surviving travel manuals to individual noble families or even individuals, enabling the refinement and supplementation of routes where ego-documents remain silent or fragmentary. Based on this approach, we have developed a relational database centred on a gazetteer linked to GeoNames. This supports standardised geocoding, distance-based quality control and uncertainty management. The resulting datasets are processed in GIS to create static maps, heatmaps and inputs for interactive web map applications.

A series of case studies spanning different periods (1–3) and source categories (A–C) – visualised as maps and presented in the contribution, with Figure 1 shown here as a representative example – illustrates the methodological approach, enables a comparison of mobility patterns, and demonstrates its broader applicability beyond the study of Grand Tours, offering potential for mapping other forms of pre-modern mobility.



Figure 1. Grand Tour of Humprecht Johann Czernin 1645–1648 (category B).

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