



# **Texts and Topics: Toward a VRE of a Virtual Republic of Letters**

**Charles van den Heuvel**

**COST Action IS1310**

**Reassembling the Republic of Letters**

**23rd March St'. Anne's College University of Oxford**

# workgroup 3 texts and topics

## Aim

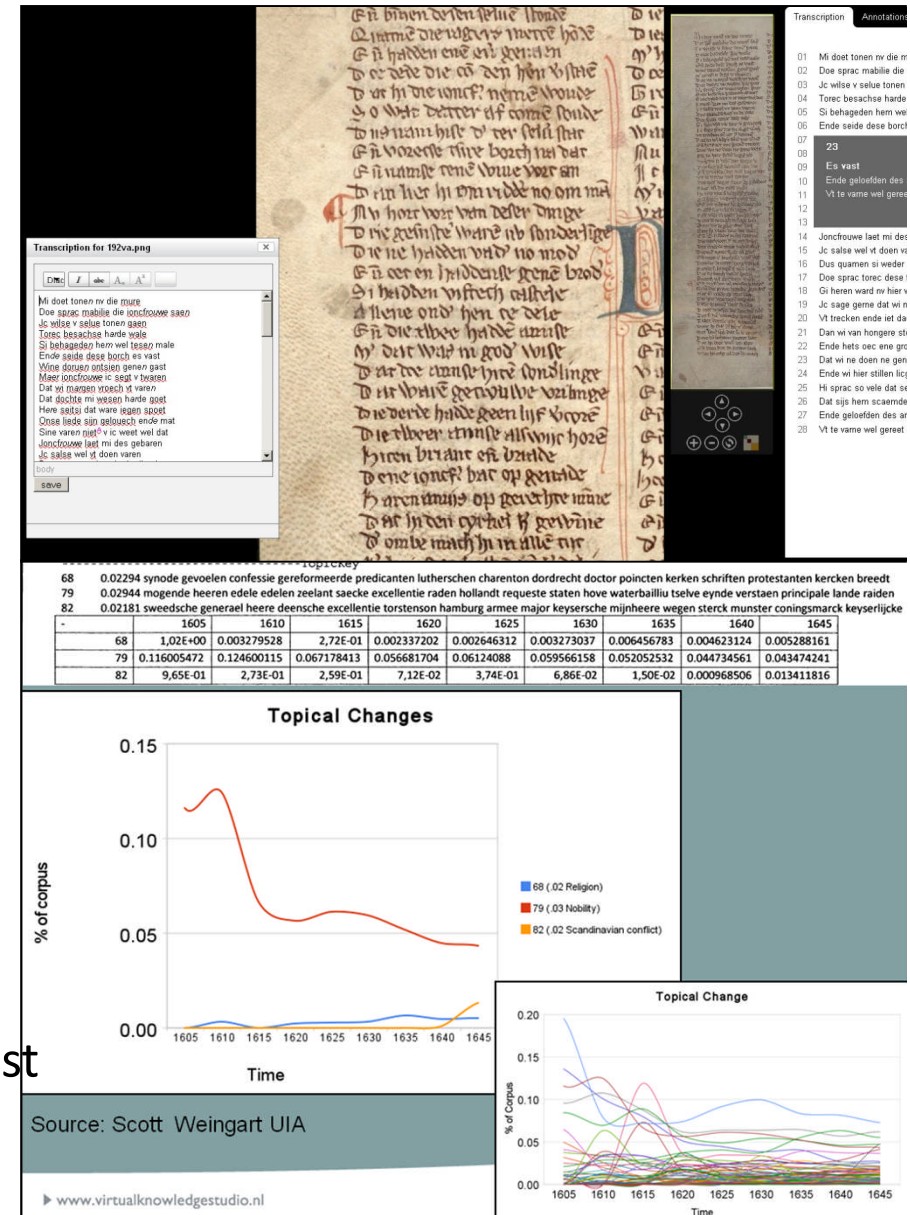
Mapping the Requirements for creating a Virtual Research Environment around the Reassembled Republic of Letters as input for a funding application

## Leading Questions

What are the requirements for a digital edition?

What are the requirements for the analysis, visualization and contextualization of the content of letters and related documents?

How can we develop and let users interact best with this Virtual Research Environment?



# challenges in creating VRE's

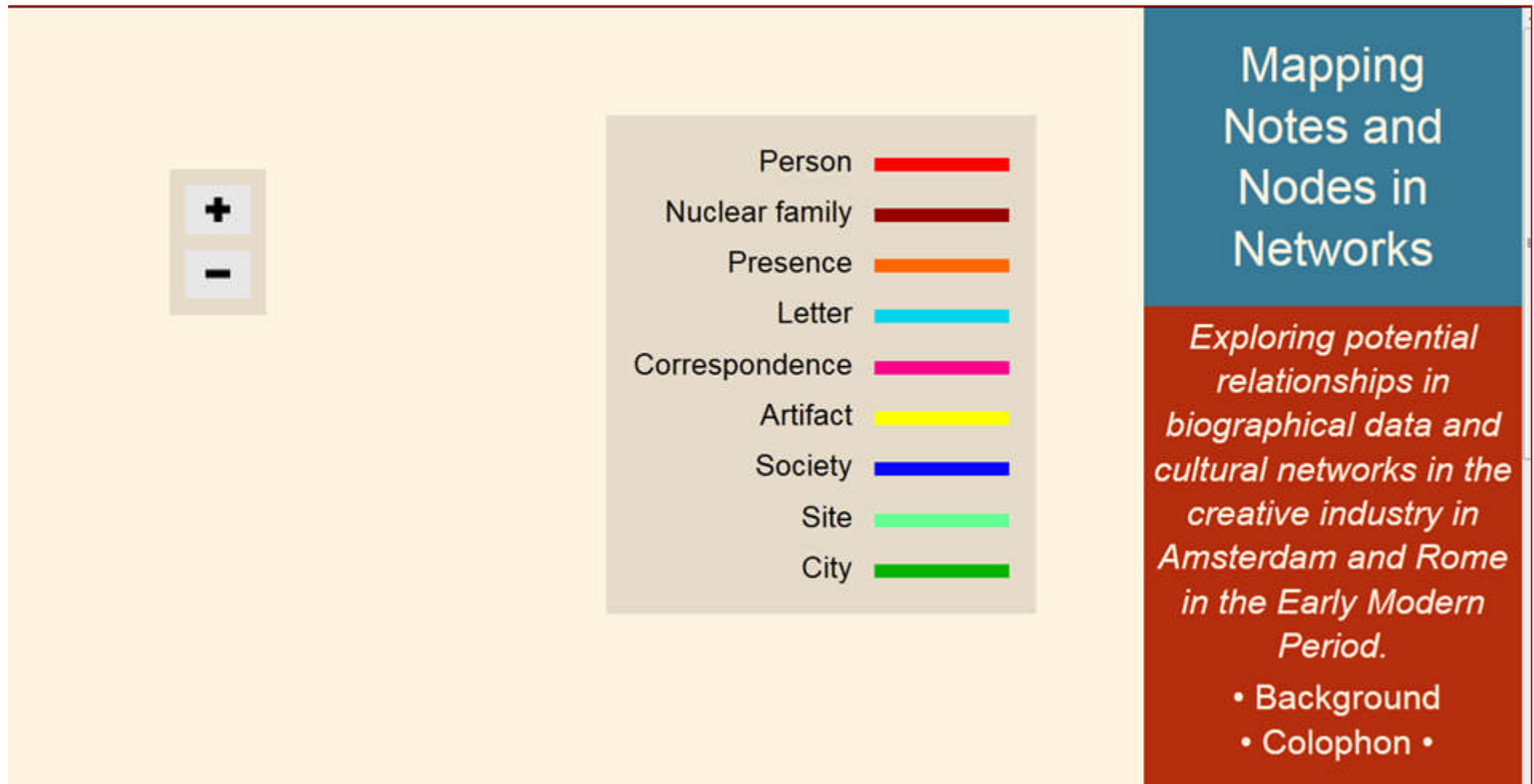
- Combining structured data and unstructured data
- Combining metadata and data
- Combining (meta)data of letters and of artefacts
- Combining multiple networks/maps (i.e. of intellectual and technological knowledge
- Combining methods ( for instance topic modeling, network analysis and spatial humanities)
- Combining analytical methods (statistical, probabilistic) with methods of exploration and interaction
- Combining scientific methods with (digital) hermeneutics
- Combining techniques to collaborate with cultures of collaboration
- Combining all this in an interactive user interface

# combining metadata of letters and of artefacts



B Campi, Ontwerp Citadel Antwerpen 1572, (detail) - Antwerpen Stadsarchief 12#10774





The screenshot displays the Nodegoat software interface. On the left, there is a control panel with a '+' button and a '-' button. In the center, a legend box lists various node types, each associated with a colored line segment: Person (red), Nuclear family (dark red), Presence (orange), Letter (cyan), Correspondence (magenta), Artifact (yellow), Society (blue), Site (light green), and City (green). On the right, a title card is visible with a blue header and a red body. The header contains the title 'Mapping Notes and Nodes in Networks'. The body contains the subtitle 'Exploring potential relationships in biographical data and cultural networks in the creative industry in Amsterdam and Rome in the Early Modern Period.' and a list of items: '• Background' and '• Colophon •'.

## Mapping Notes and Nodes in Networks

*Exploring potential relationships in biographical data and cultural networks in the creative industry in Amsterdam and Rome in the Early Modern Period.*

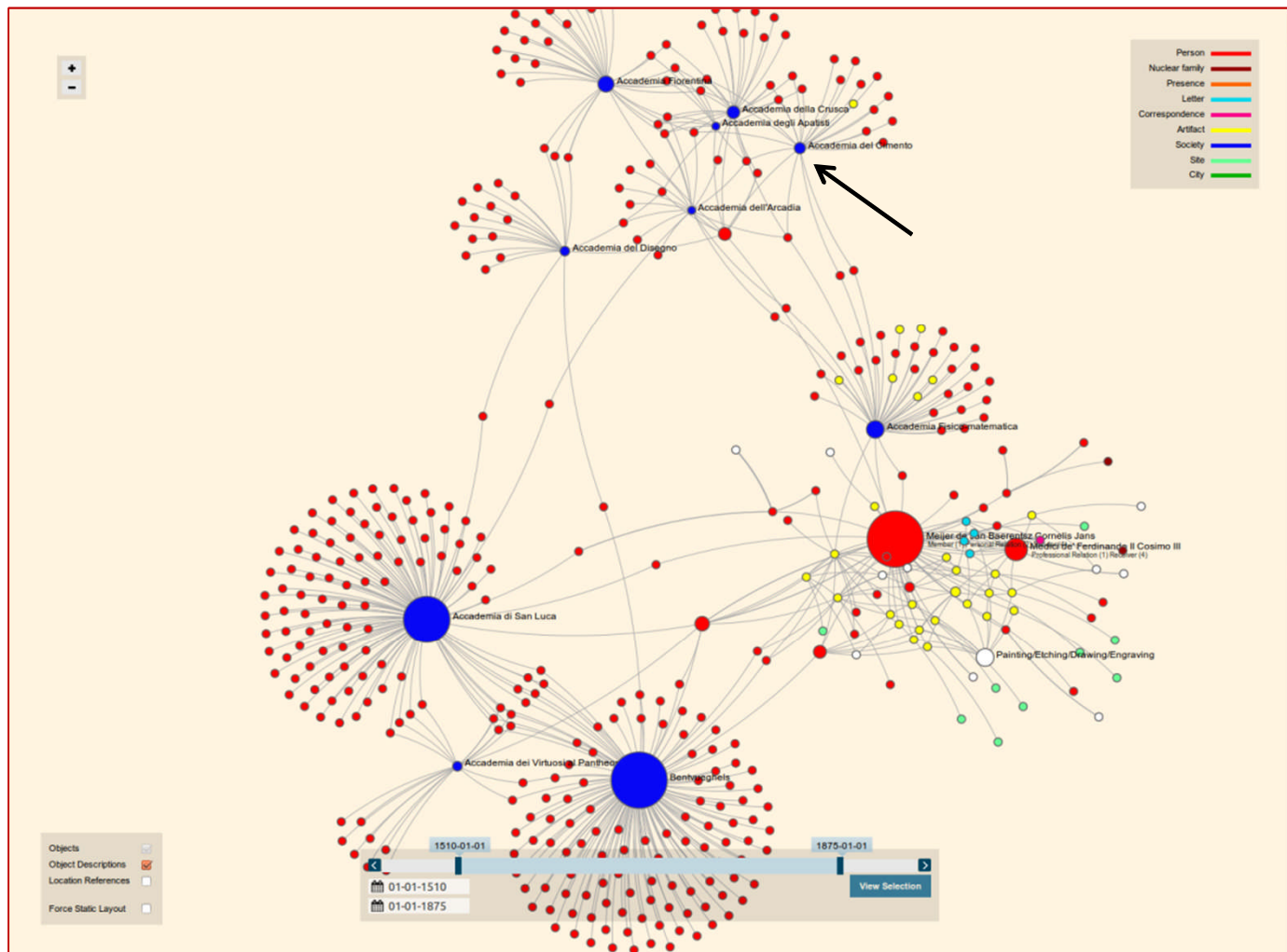
- Background
- Colophon •

Software Lab1100 – Nodegoat: <http://nodegoat.net/>

Mapping Notes and Nodes:

<http://mnn.nodegoat.net/viewer>

<https://www.huygens.knaw.nl/mapping-notes-and-nodes-in-networks/?lang=en>



### Mapping Notes and Nodes in Networks

Exploring potential relationships in biographical data and cultural networks in the creative industry in Amsterdam and Rome in the Early Modern Period.

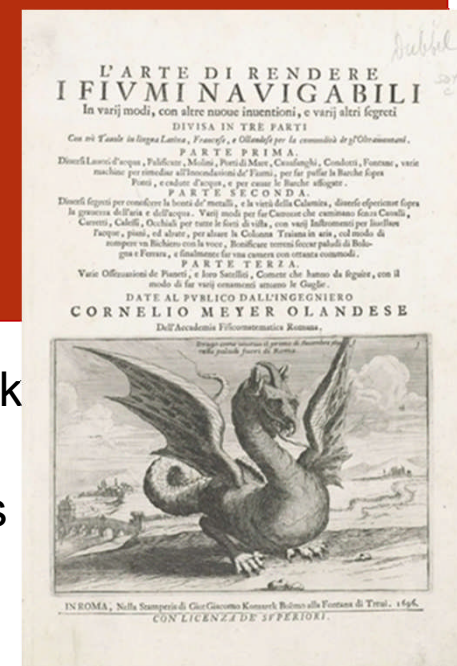
• Background • Colofon •

ECARTICO + HADRIANVS + SOTM

#### Cornelis Meijer

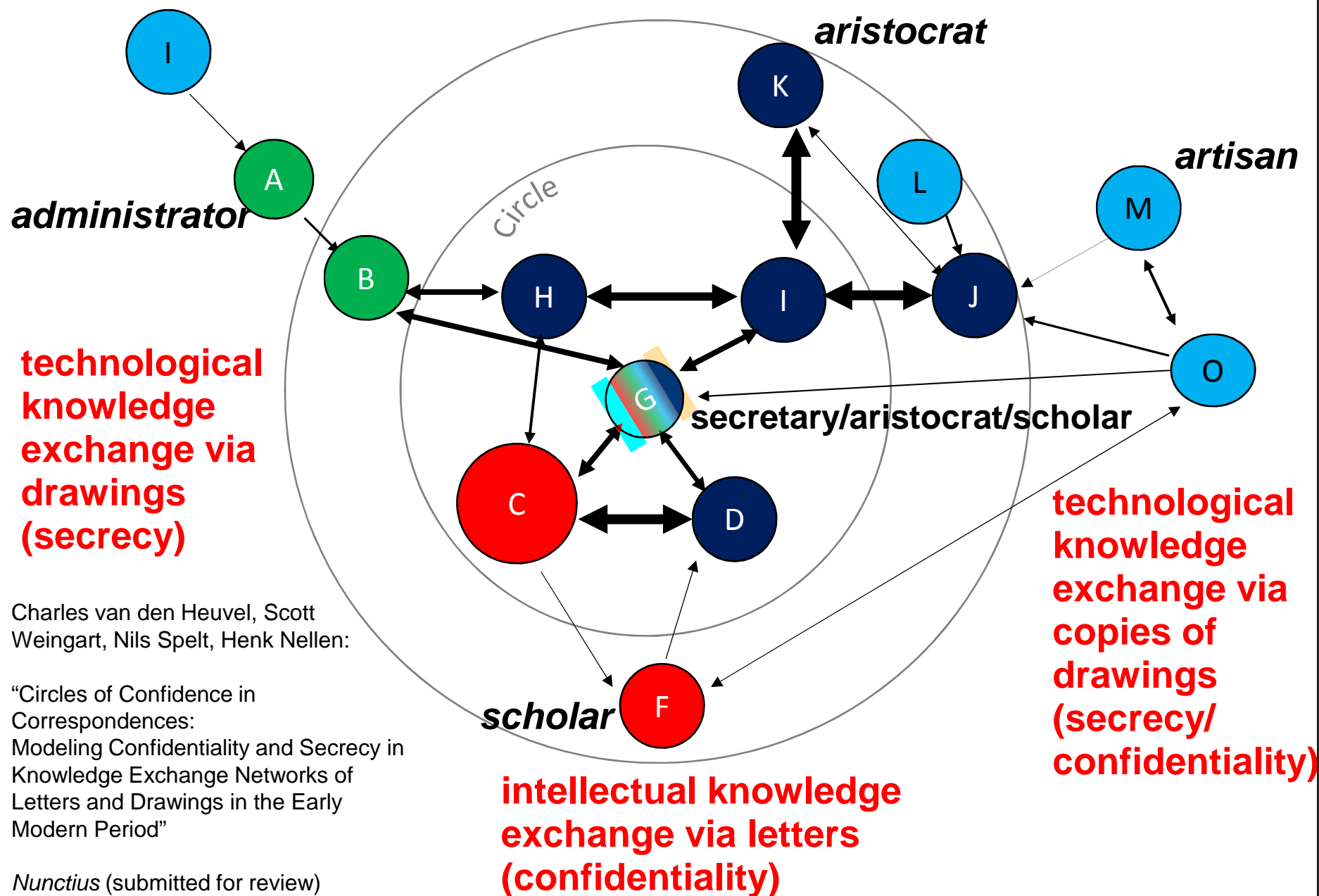
A dimension we cannot neglect is the analysis of the network as a whole, the so-called topology of the network - both because of its importance within the humanities and because our data lends itself perfectly for it. In particular we were interested in various clustering patterns of societies in hubs and in intermediary persons with few connections but linking various communities - weak ties - who were important relevant to transfer knowledge from one network to another. This aspect was studied combining data from the cases of Cornelis Meijer and Cosimo III de Medici to do research on the intellectual and artistic organisations par excellence in early modern Italy: the Accademie. These institutions gathered those interested in a particular field and were hubs for dissemination and promotion of culture. A visualization of networks around them shows they were rather isolated groups. Despite their evident tendency to be secluded groups, these Accademie were connected thanks to weak links, people that functioned as bridges between them. An example of a weak link is Cornelia Meijer. Although not a weak link in the most strict sense of the term because he was acquainted with more than one member of the same society, he was positioned between popes, statesmen, intellectuals and artists. Nowadays we would not reckon his engineering work to the creative industry, but he commissioned various Dutch and Flemish artists in Rome to make drawings and engravings after his designs. Data from the correspondence of Cosimo III included references to objects, such as books, that circulated throughout networks and reveal new nodes. When visualizing Meijer's technical publications within this correspondence including dedicatees, engravers, printers and letters mentioning Meijer's work, new nodes of his networks are shown (by clicking on 'Object Descriptions'). New insights concerning Meijer's work were possible because Ecartico, Hadrianus and Cosimo III's correspondence were brought together. For instance, the engraving 'Dragon in the Marshes' in Meijer's 'L'arte di rendere i fiumi navigabili' (...) (1696) was enclosed in a letter from his hand to Cosimo III in 1692. The engraving in the book includes a text saying the dragon was found dead in 1691. The letter tells the story how the dragon was found dead in much more detail, including how the innards had to be removed due to the stink they produced. Information on the publication comes from Hadrianus, while the letter was contributed by the correspondence of Cosimo III, retrieved from the Florence State Archive. Both Ecartico and Hadrianus complete the networks around this link with prosopographical information. The publication and the letter were brought together and contextualized by means of data integration, a connection that had led to new theories. A possibility has been suggested by Ingeborg van Vugt that Meijer sent this engraving to Cosimo III due to the Grand Duke's fondness of natural oddities as a manner of searching for his patronage in the future.

[Browse](#) [Spatial Visualisation](#) [Social Visualisation](#) [Clear All](#)



- .Correspondence of Cosimo III showing references to Meijer's work
- .Visualization Intern Ingeborg van Vugt-Leiden University
- Red nodes:people, blue nodes: academies yellow nodes:artefacts

<http://mnn.nodegoat.net/viewer>



# combining visualization of uncertainties

Computational Methods: Based on (visual) analytics

1. Mappings of probabilities.
2. Visual Contextualization by overlaying computer generated patterns
3. Graphic language based on deviation of assumed standard model

Charles van den Heuvel & Scott Weingart, Desiderata for Visualizing Uncertainty and Contextuality in the Digital Humanities Experiences with the Digital Republic of Letters Workshop: *Visualising Data Resources. The Potential of a Wikimedia Platform for the Digital Humanities* Forschungszentrum Gotha 28 April 2012. . [unpublished paper: [http://www.scottbot.net/HIAL/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/CHeuvel\\_Weingart.pdf](http://www.scottbot.net/HIAL/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/CHeuvel_Weingart.pdf), last accessed 17 February 2014.

Creation of Graphical Interfaces to contextualize and manipulate visualizations:

Design Principles for Humanist Inquiry

1. Reveal complexity
2. Think through data
3. Engage dynamics
4. Let the user structure the data

Nicole Coleman & Charles van den Heuvel “Visualizing Uncertainty And Complexity: Humanistic Methods For Mapping The Intellectual Geography Of The Early Modern World’, *Intellectual Geography: Comparative Studies, 1550-1700* (St Anne’s College, University of Oxford, 5-7 September 2011)

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# **The Republic of Letters and cultures of collaboration**

“a flexible, self-regulating and international conglomerate of learned networks, based on rules of conduct and communication which were never formalized”

Dirk van Miert, *The Republic of Letters and the sustainability of public intellectual authority, 1400-2000. The informal self-regulation of knowledge through international and transconfessional networks* (unpublished note in preparation of a funding application).

# VRE's and cultures of collaboration

A collaboratory is more than an elaborate collection of information and communications technologies; it is a new networked organizational form that also includes social processes; collaboration techniques; formal and informal communication; and agreement on norms, principles, values, and rules”

Cogburn, D. L. (2003). HCI in the so-called developing world: what's in it for everyone, *Interactions*, 10(2), 80-87, New York: ACM Press.

Stefan Dormans and Jan Kok, 'An Alternative Approach to Large Historical Databases; Exploring Best Practices with Collaboratories', *Historical Methods* 43 (2010) 3: 97-107

	<b>tools (instruments)</b>	<b>information (data)</b>	<b>knowledge (new findings)</b>
<b>aggregating across distance</b>	<b>shared instrument</b>	<b>community data system</b>	<b>virtual learning community &amp; virtual community of practice</b>
<b>co-creating across distance</b>	<b>infrastructure</b>	<b>open community contribution system</b>	<b>distributed research centre</b>

# questions

How to collect letters: digitization and crowdsourcing

How to store information: images of manuscripts and printed books, transcribed text

How to share information in a distributed model

How to code, transcribe, annotate and edit letters

How to analyze and visualize metadata and data (semi) automatically (topic modeling, ocr,, NLP)

How to create user interfaces

How to test the quality of meta(data) analysis

How to test user interfaces to repositories, digital editions, mining & topic modeling tools

How to connect to other infrastructures and VRE's (CLARIN, DariaH, ClariaH, Europeana etc.)



# Monday 23rd March -WG 3: Texts and Topics

Speaker	Time	Topic
Charles van den Heuvel	08:45-09:00	Introduction
Pip Wilcox	09:00-09:15	Coding Text
Neil Jefferies	09:15-09:30	Digital Text editions/Shared Canvas
Stefan Trausan-Matu	09:30-09:45	Natural Language Processing Topic Modeling
Charles van den Heuvel	09:45-10:00	ePistolarium
Otfried Czaika	10:00-10:15	From Digital to Print
Gertjan Filarski	10:15-10:30	Virtual Research Environments
	10:30-10:45	General discussion





Thank You

[charles.van.den.heuvel@huygens.knaw.nl](mailto:charles.van.den.heuvel@huygens.knaw.nl)