

Development of a Tool Allowing the Elaboration of a Geographical Database of Early Modern Flanders and Brabant

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SUMMARY

One of the most important cartographic products of Belgium, is the Carte de Cabinet of count Joseph de Ferraris (1770-1778). This manuscript map of the Austrian Netherlands and the Prince-Bishopric of Liège covers more or less the actual territory of Belgium on a scale of about 1:11.520. The purpose of the project STREAM is to create a geographical database as a part of a larger spatio-temporal research infrastructure for Flanders and Brabant (Belgium) in the early modern period. The approach used to build the vectorial dataset can best be described as a retrogressive method. The content of the historical map is compared to the vector data of the actual topographic map on 1:10.000 of Belgium produced by the national mapping agency. This map offers the advantage of being positionally accurate, whereas the geometric reliability of the older maps is questionable. By identifying similar features on different maps, an interpretation of the features in the past is completed. To digitize and edit the georeferenced scanned maps a specific editing platform was developed in order to be able to consult all these maps commonly in a practical manner so that scientists (esp. historians) can focus on the interpretation in the first place (without having them to immerse themselves in the large opportunities of a GIS-platform). The development of this platform is the first step towards a spatio-temporal research structure. As we expect a continuous need to interpret the perceived objects, in a following step the actual map and the 18th-century Carte de Cabinet will be confronted with other cartographic documents (such as the present soil map or maps of the 19th century, including the early cadastral maps, but also older aerial pictures). The ultimate goal of the STREAM project is the further enrichment of the produced vector dataset (by historians) with demographic and socio-economic data from population censuses, surveys, birth and death records, land registers, and other sources.