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Developing multi-layered data and collection information networks: the origin and history of the collections of the Meertens Instituut.

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Developing multi-layered data and collection information networks: the origin and history of the collections of the Meertens Instituut.

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“When we concentrate mainly on the links in information exchange, the patterns of the information networks almost draw themselves” – Charles Jeurgens.

At past European Social Science and History conferences the need for researchers and content providers to cooperate closely regarding research data and digital collections became increasingly evident. Particularly at the Spatial and Digital History network the combining of resources is rapidly becoming a requirement for success. Recently, at the Digital Humanities Benelux 2018 Conference, this necessity was, by a consortium of researchers and content providers (Düring et al., 2018), conceptualized in one word: “transparency” (p. 2). They argued that transparency is amongst other things, “(...) the effort to provide information which helps assess the provenance and quality of a born digital or digitized source” (p. 2).

This paper focuses on extracting, processing and visualizing the information regarding the provenance of humanities research collections. It reflects on the theory of Charles Jeurgens (2012) in relation to the provenance of collections and the creation of archival networks. The provenance of data and collections is visualized by processing data about the origin of the collections and using dedicated network software such as Palladio and Nodegoat (Palladio, 2019; Nodegoat, 2019).¹ The extensive collection of the Meertens Instituut (Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences) are used as a use case in order to make the first steps in visualizing transparency of provenance (Jongenburger et al., 2013). And finally, the outcomes will be incorporated in my PhD research, which is about the history of the collections of the Meertens Instituut.

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¹ As this research is ongoing, experiments with other network analysis tools will be considered. Various data visualization platforms and network architectures have been developed. For visualizing data Palladio is one of the platforms that can be used as a network tool for the humanities. It is built by Stanford University and recommended by several PhD students (Palladio, 2019). Nodegoat was used in the project ‘Circulation of Knowledge and Learned Practices in the 17th-century Dutch Republic’ (Huygens, 2019).

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