

How many climate zones? The spread of cosmographic knowledge in the early modern period

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The ancient authoritative subdivision of the inhabitable regions of Earth into seven climate zones began to be challenged during the 16th century.

As the related knowledge was mostly displayed in the form of computational tables, and since the analysis of available sources exceeds human capacities because of their number and complexity, the sources relevant to the purpose of this paper are here first identified and analyzed by means of an unsupervised deep convolutional network.

Based on a description of some of the identified tables, it will be shown a) which new solutions started to spread in concomitance with a growing awareness—arising from the contemporary journeys of exploration—that the inhabitable region differed from that conceived by ancient scholars, and b) how the success of a new solution depended upon its capacity to harmonize with traditional, accepted knowledge.

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