

Comments on Ellis, Haber, Horrillo

Outline

- What the paper does
 - Skip this.
- Literature
 - Markets and growth
- Data
 - What we know about the world at time t
 - What we know about the world
- Counterfactuals
 - T. Jefferson vs E.A Wrigley

Literatures

- Paper is more than an attack on grid cell approaches to market access.
 - It proposes a new tool
- synthetic approach to four key questions in economic history
 - Market access before market access (Sokoloff)
 - Social Savings (Fogel)
 - Trade and growth (Williamson, Finlay O'Rourke)
 - Urbanization vs Urban networks (De Vries)

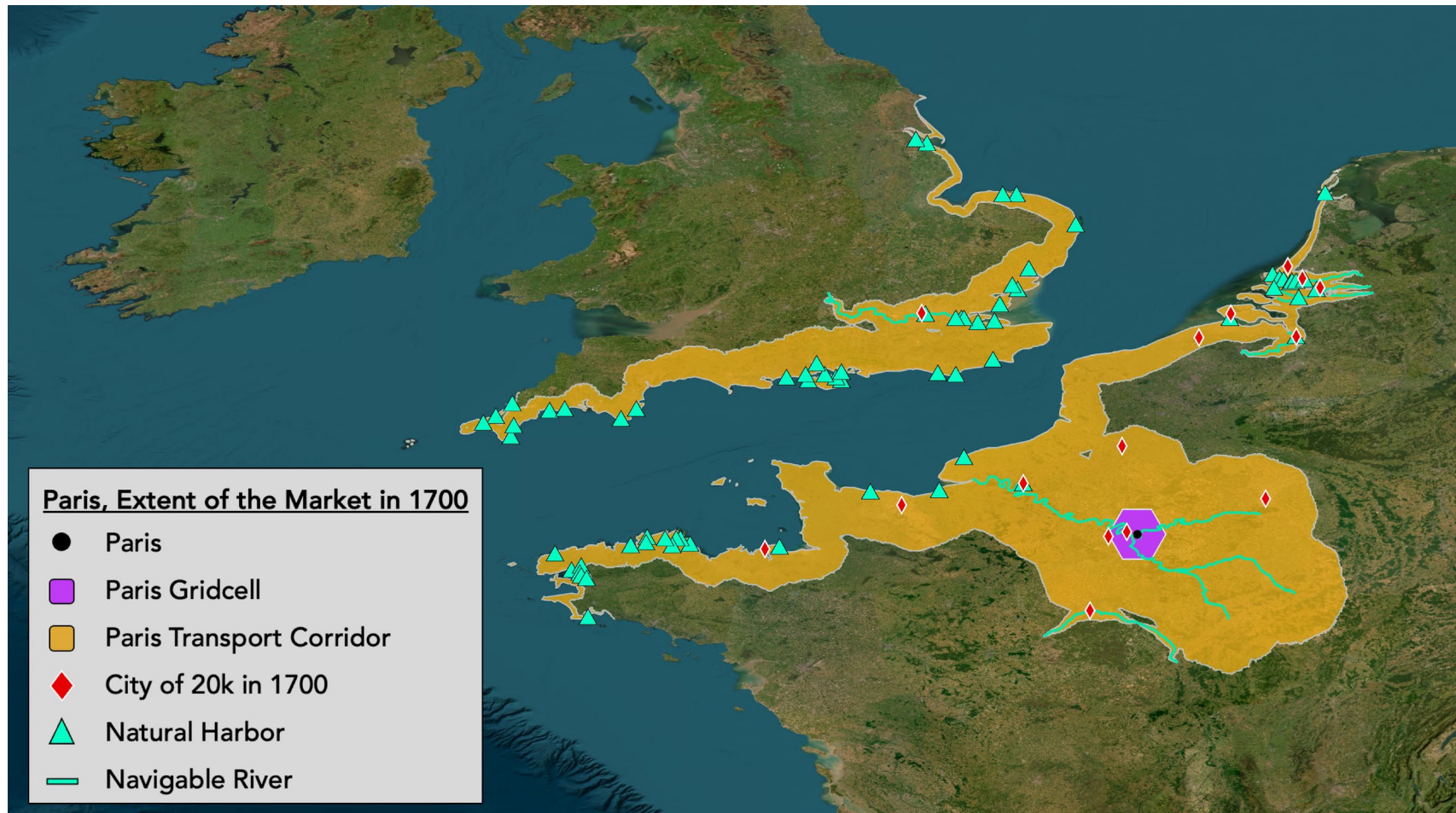
Data now and forever

- Crop suitability
 - I just do not follow the historical evaluation
 - Lets not forget Grilliches “diffusion of hybrid corn,” or more recently Olmstead and Rhode “creating abundance”
 - Fertility is endogenous
- Bulk commodities
 - Trade by volume or by weight? What matters to growth
- Cities before 1800
 - Cities in 1750 or any city at any time before 1750
 - (possibilities vs sustained urbanization)

Data and counterfactuals

- Maps show market access is correlated with city density
 - (I think)
- It is predictive to about 1900
 - (I think)
- Where are the errors
 - Where are there missing cities?
- If Switzerland had been flat, how much more would it have urbanized?
- If the English model of urbanization applied to the rest of Europe..to China

More endogeneity



Beyond DMR, Some buried assumptions unearthed

- George Grantham's views on urbanization and trade
 - The supply response to market reorganization is large
 - (increasing return before politics)
- Three possible constraints to urbanization
 - Geography (EHH)
 - Food (Malthusians)
 - Demography (cities have negative balance)

To sum up

- EHH have a great tool
- It is now deployed at a very wide scale.
 - Not sure it provides much dramatic surprise
 - Though it is important to be systematic.
- Taking it down to more specific problems is where it is really going to shine