

Uses, Conflicts and Regulations in Micro-places: The Case of Early Modern Lyons

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The utilization of a GIS (Geographical Information System) permits the highlighting of urban strategies seen through textual fonts in early modern Lyons. The town council applied a long-lasting micro-urbanism aiming to improve traffic, to enlarge squares and to control the spatial usage. However, popular culture remained very reluctant, defending two kinds of appropriation. Streets and squares were considered a normal extension of professional premises, and militia units often came into conflict over shared parade grounds.

Keywords: Small Squares. Micro-Urbanism. Spatial Usage. Conflict. Lyons. Urban Militia. Early Modern Period.

Any urban spatial study absolutely depends upon precise mapping. For a very long time, historical studies on Lyons lacked spatial analysis. Indeed, no cadastral plan existed before the beginning of the nineteenth century; we only had local drawings and general views *a volo d'uccello*. Of course, the general plan of Séraucourt published in 1735 offered reliable topographical and onomastical information but did not show parcels of land.¹ However, spatial analysis was absolutely necessary for any comprehensive historical approach in view of local specificities. The expansion of Lyons began at the end of the fifteenth century, thanks to four annual trade fairs instituted as war machines against Geneva; as a border city, Lyons was also the bridgehead of French military expeditions in Italy. The concentration of capital fostered industrialization, mainly silk weaving and printing. Around 1550, the population totalled 55,000 inhabitants, but the civil wars destroyed this prosperity and, at the very beginning of the seventeenth century, the population had fallen to 32,000 people.² Then occurred a real reconversion. Lyons was transformed into an industrial city: silk waving improved in its technical level and employed more and more people while many industries progressed – fustian weaving, trimming, millinery, the making of gildings and, continuously, printing. Demographic growth was intense, despite the great plague of 1628–1629 and, circa 1690, the population came to exceed 100,000 people. The food scarcity of 1693–1694, the terrible winter of 1709 and, overall, the disastrous conjuncture in the second part of Louis XIV's reign broke once again this expansion, and no demographic recovery was possible until 1740. Lyons then became a main producer of high-priced silk clothes for export to America and all over Europe, as far as St Petersburg. Demographic growth restarted, and Lyons had circa 130,000 inhabitants on the eve of Revolution.³

Thus, the population had roughly quadrupled over two centuries. But urbanization had followed a different rhythm. Covered with convents, the two hills of Fourvière and La Croix-Rousse had conserved a semi-rural character. If several urban plans were

1 Plan géométral de la ville de Lyon par Claude Séraucourt, 1735, 1/3000°, 136 cm x 155 cm. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b/53052814p>.

2 ZELLER, Démographie historique et géographie sociale.

3 BAYARD – CAYEZ, Lyon des origines à nos jours.

proposed in the second half of the eighteenth century, they only aimed to create new elite dwellings by reclaiming land on the riverbeds.⁴ So the built zone was scarcely extended. In fact, two practices had permitted the accommodation of additional inhabitants: During the seventeenth century, a lot of houses were heightened, many reaching five floors; then in the following century, popular housing was strongly divided, and *la chambre* – the room – became an ordinary rental unit.⁵

The evolution of public space remained unstudied until, in the 1990s and the first decade of the new millennium, a major undertaking was carried out by the geographer and historian Bernard Gauthiez. He realized a Geographical Information System⁶ dedicated to the historical reconstruction of the plot map and of the street network of the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries. In brief, the methods consisted, in a first phase, in considering a Napoleonic general cadastral map as a base towards a regressive reconstruction whose main source was the collection of municipal building permits, crossed with census and fiscal roles. The distinctive character of this work was its ability to map information extracted from purely textual sources concerning more than 3000 houses.⁷ In a second phase, this GIS was supplemented by studying still existing buildings and by integrating elements offered by rent registers and notarized acts.⁸ So, it is now possible to consider the spatial transformations and the evolution of property values.⁹

This progress allows a better knowledge of urban space,¹⁰ particularly of small sized squares and public spaces, usually neglected by textual descriptions and city representations. In the same way, it permits very precise measurements of the streets and the squares. Free widths imposed by municipal alignments were originally defined according to the local surveying system in *toises* (fathoms = 6 *pieds*), *pieds* (royal French feet), *pouces* (inches = 1/12 *pieds*) and even *lignes* (lines = 1/12 *pouces*), whose metric equivalent is, theoretically, 0.24 cm.¹¹ So, the calculation possibilities of the GIS can be exploited for the determination of the surface areas of streets and squares everywhere in the city.¹²

The results are unanimous: in the fifteenth century, Lyons was absolutely destitute of free urban spaces. When King Louis XII visited Lyons in 1507, the only opportunities for organizing tournaments were offered by two main streets: *la Grenette* and *la Juiverie*.¹³ Until the second half of the seventeenth century, the celebrated squares of *Bellecour* and *les Terreaux* did not yet exist. *Bellecour* was nothing more than a waste ground where carters used to discharge demolition materials and, in 1655, a poor journeyman,

4 ZELLER, Enjeux d'urbanisme.

5 GARDEN, Lyon et les Lyonnais.

6 About technical aspects: PINOL, Les systèmes.

7 GAUTHIEZ – ZELLER, Ordre textuel et ordre spatial.

8 GAUTHIEZ – ZELLER, Un SIG historique sur l'espace urbain.

9 GAUTHIEZ – ZELLER, Lyons, the Spatial Analysis.

10 GAUTHIEZ – ZELLER, Beautifying the city and improving the streets with building permits.

11 As most French cities, Lyons used a particular metrology. The conversion values calculated in 1795, when the metrical system was enforced, were 2.568 meters for a *toise*, 34.25 centimeters for a *pied*, 2.85 centimeters for a *pouce* and 0.24 centimeters for a *ligne*.

12 I am indebted to Bernard Gauthiez for having calculated the surface areas of the small squares in early modern Lyons and for having designed the map of parade grounds.

13 The toponyms quoted in this paper can be localized on Map 1.

Chonno, was still paid by the city council to pull up thistles.¹⁴ Bellecour was promoted as a Place Royale as late as 1713, then becoming place Louis-le-Grand. For a long time, Les Terreaux also remained a subaltern zone, outside the city until the enlargement of the fortification lines during the first half of the sixteenth century. Situated on the ditches of the old ramparts, activities on les Terreaux incurred a great many undesirabilities: the danger of powder-making, the smoke and the smell of candle-making, the noise of the shooting yard, the dirtiness of the pig market, the lowings from the slaughter house... Gentrification began after 1650, when a new city hall was built there and, overall, during the eighteenth century, around the new theatre.

So, Lyons had only two public squares until the second half of the eighteenth century: Confort and Les Cordeliers. Both of them came from ecclesiastical real estate. In 1557, as the town forces found no place to line up their cannon, the Dominicans were obliged by royal justice to sell a large piece of land in front of their convent, despite their harsh opposition.¹⁵ In the same year, a more amicable agreement was concluded between the city counsellors and the Franciscans, who swapped an important piece of ground for an annual rent and for the building of their new surrounding wall at the expense of the city.¹⁶ Indeed, a third important square existed in Lyons in front of the cathedral; but it was in the middle of the canon's cloister, beyond the town council's jurisdiction. Civic space could mainly be improved by reducing cemeteries.¹⁷ This occurred by force, as when Protestants destroyed the St Sorlin cemetery, or by negotiation, as in Saint-Nizier in 1565, when town counsellors were able to slightly enlarge the square dedicated to the cheese trade. Indeed, parish vestrymen were overall interested in investments, such as creating around the cemetery lines of shops for rent, or transforming part of the holy ground into land for building developments, as in Notre-Dame de la Platière.¹⁸

As a matter of fact, the town council only disposed of weak juridical and financial means, being chronically indebted. In 1697, when general public lighting was ordered, seven architects were commissioned for the realization of a general survey of the street network. Most of them measured not only the length of each street, but also its width and, when the topography was complex, they calculated an equalized width (*une largeur esgallée*). The results show clearly how narrow streets in Lyons still were. Length weighted, the average width was only 5.2 m (Table 1).

In the context of such a spatial paucity, the least free space was considered as a square, even when it was nothing more significant than a short enlargement of a street or an improvement of a crossing. Yet traffic, crafts, trades, firefighting, feasts and the militia absolutely needed space. This is to emphasize the frequency with which the small squares became the objects of popular usage, regulation and conflict, their improvement being an important stake in municipal policy. Here are the main goals of the present paper. Of course, historians have nourished a long curiosity towards urban specialized spaces, often likening functions to architectural characters.¹⁹ Recently,

¹⁴ Archives municipales de Lyon (henceforth A.M.L.), BB 210, f°357, 29 July 1655. BB serie is available on line. www.fondsenligne.archives-lyon.fr/ac69v2/deliberation.php.

¹⁵ A.M.L., AA 32, 123, 1557; BB 80, f° 133, 12 June 1557.

¹⁶ A.M.L., BB 80, f° 252v°, 9 December 1557.

¹⁷ MASLAKOVIC, Churchyard and Civic Square, 190–193.

¹⁸ GAUTHIEZ – ZELLER, Environnement urbain, savoir médical et résistances, 431–346.

¹⁹ For instance: CALABI, Il mercato. CALABI, Fabbriche.

Suzanne Rau published an important work about urban space.²⁰ Our study just aims to offer new elements of knowledge regarding the socio-cultural uses of the places and of the streets. Indeed, many things are still to be written on the material and symbolical appropriation of urban spaces.²¹

Table 1: Street dimensions in Lyons, 1697. (Source: Archives municipales de Lyon, FF 752)

Street width (metres)	Number of Streets	Average length (meters)	Length part in the street network (%)
<i>Less than 2.5</i>	5	58	1 %
2.5–3	12	99	4 %
3–3.5	8	52	2 %
3.5–4	25	99	10 %
4–4.5	9	124	4 %
4.5–5	26	122	12 %
5–5.5	9	154	5 %
5.5–6	17	210	14 %
6–6.5	5	208	4 %
<i>More than 6.5</i>	20	134	10 %
<i>Unknown</i>	31	297	34 %
<i>Whole set</i>	163	159	100 %

1 – The various uses of public space

1a – In such an industrial and commercial town as Lyons, local authorities were always worrying about traffic. Of course, it was embarrassed because of the narrowness of most of the streets. At many points, two carts could not pass each other, and pedestrians had sometimes to take refuge inside the houses. Accidents often occurred, for instance when a heavy cart crashed into a house. But the local topography made things worse. On the right side of the Saône, houses occupied a narrow strip of land between the river and the hill. All the traffic arriving from the north of the kingdom was obliged to follow a particular route, which lead to a single stone bridge, partially covered with houses. Even if wooden bridges were launched from the second third of the seventeenth century, they brought little help, being often damaged or destroyed by boats, floods and ice, as well as by a lack of maintenance. Thus huge traffic jams occurred around the stone bridge and along the main streets leading to the sole bridge on the Rhône. Writing in 1650, Samuel Chappuzeau could write: "In Mercière and Hospital streets as well in Flandres and St-John Streets and, overall, around the bridge over the Saône, people are pushed, are hit, are carried out. We always feel as though we should be at the tail of a procession".²² Despite local improvements, things became worse during

20 RAU, Räume der Stadt.

21 ZELLER, Histoire de l'Europe urbaine: la ville modern. (Paris: Le Seuil, 1. ed. 2003. Spanish translation, Valencia: Publicacions Universitat de Valencia, 2011; French new edition, Paris: Le Seuil, 2012; Chinese translation, Shanghai: Shanghai Educational Publishing House, currently in press).

22 Translation by Olivier Zeller. Original text: « dans les rues Mercière et de l'Hôpital, dans celles de Flandres et de Saint-Jean et surtout aux avenues [abords] du pont de Saône, l'on se pousse, l'on se heurte, l'on se porte il semble toujours que l'on marche à la queue de quelque procession ». CHAPPUZEAU, Lyon dans son lustre, 22.

the eighteenth century because of population growth and industrial activity, but also because of the increasing number of hansom cabs creating order problems, especially around the theatre.

1b – This dense traffic was hardly compatible with the daily needs of inhabitants. The legal distinction opposing public space to private space was rather inconsistent. The street was an essential working place. For instance, wheelwrights often dug in the street an *embature*, a kind of trench useful for repairing large wheels.²³ Many farriers were working in the very heart of the city, despite the hazard of fire and the room occupied by horses, generally under a canopy darkening the street.²⁴ Huge problems could occur when a house had to be rebuilt. Masons, carpenters, joiners and roofers could hardly find the space necessary to store their materials. So public squares often received timber, tiles and stone.²⁵ In 1640, even such a well-known mason as Philibert Caille could impede the traffic on a main thoroughfare, the rue Mercière; he also stored new material on Herberie square, where a vegetable market usually stood, and on Port-le-Roi harbour, impeding any unloading.²⁶ Such blockages set off many complaints and police reports,²⁷ even when house owners were considered responsible for the faults committed by their masons.²⁸

Stone carvers used to build worksite huts as near as possible to construction sites,²⁹ and carpenters were sometimes obliged to use squares – maybe cemeteries, too – to assemble trusses. The least nooks hosted small-scale occupations, such as benches used by small traders, or wooden sheds sheltering tailors, shoemakers or roasters.

The water supply was another major stake. Lyons had not a sufficient number of public wells. Some were built along the front walls of dwelling houses; others were in the very middle of the streets, as Grenette well was, or at the crossing of two streets, as Puits-Pelu was, or in a little square, as on Justice Palace square or in the St-Paul butchery. They not only obstructed traffic by causing gatherings of servants pouring their buckets. They systematically attracted "*les femmes revenderesses*", poor women reselling mainly fruits and vegetables. They needed water to wash their merchandise, and the well was a good place to meet customers. But these women were said to pollute the wells by throwing garbage in them.³⁰ Other *revenderesses* used to work in the narrow spaces available on both sides of the Saône bridge. Together with men, they used to sell second-hand objects – old books, tools, rusted swords – but also meat, bread and fish, against urban regulations. The surroundings of wells were also dangerous and conflictual areas because of the lack of care of stablemen who used

23 A.M.L., DD 31, 24 July 1670; DD 31, 1 December 1671.

24 A.M.L., BB 193, f°88, 12 April 1639; DD 45, 15 December 1648 and 18 May 1656; BB 215, f° 66, 27 January 1660; DD 30, 22 March 1668; DD 32, 18 February 1672; DD 33, 8 March et 25 April 1674; DD 33, 25 March 1675; DD 34, 17 December 1677; DD 37, 15 June and 13 July 1683, 7 September 1684; DD 39, 15 December 1692; DD 41, 4 July 1698.

25 A.M.L., BB 194, f°184, 17 December 1640; BB 339, f°48, 28 May 1771. Archives départementales du Rhône, 8C 438, 30 March 1781.

26 A.M.L., BB 196, f° 223, 8 December 1642.

27 A.M.L., BB 189, f° 171, 6 November 1636; BB 196, f° 110, 27 June; f° 163, 21 August 1642; f° 223, 8 December 1642; DD 44, f° 422, 28 January 1642, f° 424, 11 February 1642, f° 425, 20 March 1642, f° 74, 21 May 1642; BB 196, f° 21, 4 January 1643, f° 74, 21 May 1643; BB 197, f° 20, 15 January 1643; f° 62, 30 April 1643.

28 A.M.L., DD 44, f° 422, 28 January 1642, f° 424, 11 February 1642, f° 425, 20 March 1642, f° 74, 21 May 1642.

29 A.M.L., BB 58, f° 149 v°, 23 March 1541.

30 A.M.L., BB 214, f° 233, 24 July 1659.

to tie up horses all around their edges. Pedestrians had to push their croups (rumps), risking being bitten or kicked. However, local populations were attached to the wells. When a suppression was programmed, inhabitants often went to the town hall, lead by their militia officers, and argued how precious their well was in the case of fire. Access to the Rhône and Saône was very difficult because of fortifications and lines of houses built out over the water. Firefighting mainly used human chains transmitting leather buckets from the well to the burning house.

1c – Public space, mainly river harbours and small squares, were being used as dumps. In the middle of the sixteenth century, stone and timber that lay everywhere was reused for the building of fortifications.³¹ Masons very often left demolition materials, as in 1640, when a mason abandoned stone impeding any access to the very important guardroom of l'Herberie.³² A heavy fine of 50 pounds seems to have been rather insufficient,³³ and the town officer in charge of the streets, the *voyer*, had to clear some 70 places in 1644.³⁴ Two years later, nothing had changed and many masons were fined again.³⁵

1d – From a military point of view, the lack of inner squares constituted a defensive weakness. During the sixteenth century, the inhabitants were organized in militia wards named *pennonnages*, each flag being named a *pennon*. Their main role was to occupy ramparts if the town was besieged. Special lists named *établies* fixed the positions to be held by each unit *en cas d'effroy* – in the case of attack. Some were always kept as a reserve in the heart of the town. But space was not sufficiently available. One could deplore the impossibility of gathering 50 armed men in the same place, particularly on the right side of river Saône.³⁶ Years after the conquest of Lyons by Protestant troops in 1562, this lack of space was still interpreted as a major reason explaining why no counter-attack had been possible: the canons of St John, as well as those of St Paul, had barricaded their cloister, so no meeting point had been left for Catholic soldiers who, consequently, were unable to manoeuvre.³⁷ Later, when the place des Changes was cleared, it remained a fully strategical point on the western side of the bridge, in homology with the place de l'Herberie, where a second guardroom was established. During wars or social crises, the town's light artillery was disposed at the bottom of every bridge: this emphasizes the strategical importance of two small squares controlling the only passage from one part of the town to another.

Out of such circumstances, every *pennonage* needed a parade ground. This space was used for drilling and for gathering those men called for the night guard. Here inhabitants had also to hasten when the tocsin announced a fire. The square was also used for ward festivals in honour of the birth of a Dauphin, of the recovery of a dangerously sick sovereign, of a military victory or of a peace treaty.

31 A.M.L., BB 64, f° 211 v°, 26 October 1546.

32 A.M.L., BB 194, f° 186, 18 December 1640.

33 A.M.L., BB 197, f° 103, 9 July 1643; BB 199, f° 72, 27 April 1645.

34 A.M.L., BB 198, f° 102, 28 June; f° 112, 14 July 1644.

35 A.M.L., BB 200, f° 11, 4 and 8 January 1646.

36 A.M.L., AA 106, f° 320, 25 October 1583; BB 111, f° 259, 16 December 1583.

37 A.M.L., BB 111, f° 251, 15 December 1583.

2 – Spatial conflicts

Spatial concurrence was occurring everywhere, between traffic, dwellings, work and trade. So conflicts broke out, setting inhabitants against others, illegal users of public space against town authorities and wards against the neighbouring militia units.

2a – House owners were often complaining about street activities. In 1559, inhabitants of the rich quartier de la Juiverie got rid of dyers.³⁸ In the same period, royal judges of the Sénéchaussée³⁹ evicted leather craftsmen, especially tanners, who had to leave la Juiverie and to settle far away around the place Confort,⁴⁰ from where they were evicted again in 1576.⁴¹ The leather market was henceforth fixed in the rue de la Grenette; the town authorities had explicitly chosen a wide and poor street... Both cases concerned collective actions. The town council was acting differently with regard to individual situations. For instance, when the canons of Saint-Nizier church sued in court against an iron monger who used to cut long metal bars in the middle of the place de la Fromagerie, this man was protected by municipal action.⁴² Some local conflicts could be solved in mutually agreeable ways. For instance, a paper seller, Jean Delabat, was opposed to his neighbour, the farrier André Frugère, who had fastened a ring in one of the pillars of their common house and used it for tying up horses. Delabat complained, showing the members of his family to be exposed to heavy risks as soon as they approached the door. The town council went to the spot and gave an unusual authorization. Frugère was allowed to hammer an oak pole into the public cobblestones, two-and-a-half feet from the frontage. Despite the impeding of traffic, this decision ended the conflict: Delabat's family could go in and out more safely, and the farrier could go on working.⁴³ The town council often played a conciliatory role, and a lot of similar examples could be exposed. They did not concern only streets and squares: fluvial conflicts often occurred too, when millers fought for the best moorings, or when boatmen struggled for access to tiny harbours. Les gens de rivière – river people – were said to be violent; so the agents of the town council were escorted by soldiers in such cases.

Local opposition could be strong enough to ensure the modifying of spatial uses regarding livestock markets. The pig market was originally organized on the tiny square in front of St Peter's church. Inhabitants said the animals were destroying the doors of their houses, and the market was transferred into the ditches of the old ramparts in 1576.⁴⁴ But in 1646, the decision to build nearby a prestigious town hall justified a new removal towards the bottom of the city, in St Just, where the bovine and ovine market already stood.⁴⁵ Similarly the horse market: originally held in Bellecour, it was relegated to the nearby southern ramparts.

2b – Many conflicts opposed people and the authorities, who hardly enforced town regulations. The aforementioned *voyer* had to ride the streets for the ordering

38 A.M.L, BB 81, f° 194, 27 August 1559.

39 The « Sénéchaussée » justice court had played an important political role during the sixteenth century. Later, it still laid down administrative regulations.

40 A.M.L, BB 81, 1557–1560.

41 A.M.L, BB 94, f° 224, 14 December 1576.

42 A.M.L, BB 166, f° 118, 5 May 1625.

43 A.M.L, BB 226, f° 48, 20 March 1670.

44 A.M.L, BB 94, f° 27, 31 January 1576.

45 A.M.L, BB 200, f° 164, 15 November 1646.

of new paving when the cobblestones were damaged, for the surveying of masons and carpenters building new houses to ensure their accordance to local rules and, daily, for the hunting down of any kind of spatial appropriation. He was faced with a common popular culture, seeing public space around every workshop as a normal expansion of the work area. In the same way, much merchandise was stocked along the facades. Texts often describe banks, harbours and streets blocked by logs and faggots; wood sellers were not mindful of fire hazard.

The town counsellors hoped to obtain better spatial control. They tried concentrating the main food trades. Theoretically, meat could only be purchased in four butcheries. Two were special buildings, denoted *boucheries fermées*: the butcheries of the Hôtel-Dieu hospital and of La Lanterne. Two were just a group of specialized houses around a slightly enlarged street, and were called *boucheries ouvertes*: St Georges butchery and St Paul poultry market. But many transgressions were committed.⁴⁶

A similar regulation was applied to fish: from 1583, it could only be sold outdoors. Three points were prescribed, all near to a waterway: in front of the putrid royal jails, near the entrance of the Hôtel-Dieu and on the little square of La Platière. In fact, small fish merchants also inconveniently occupied a part of the place de l'Herberie, crossed by the main traffic route through the sole bridge. In the seventeenth century, the town authorities tried to control this activity by concentrating it in a special building. Two fish halls were successively built near the Saône.⁴⁷ This was a complete failure because of popular resistance. The concessionary lost money for lack of customers, and urban police could only lament the "difficulties which happened for trying to force women selling fish to set up in the covered market, as well as for preventing fish hawkers from going into the streets, squares and crossings, cutting and selling their fish there".⁴⁸ The market lease collapsed from 2320 pounds in 1673 to only 460 in 1682. Clearly, these women were attached to their freedom to use public spaces, while customers probably found convenient the proximity of these little suppliers. Outside any efficient control, street vendors proffered a great many foodstuffs everywhere, including in the suburbs.⁴⁹

2c – Many conflicts were strictly located on squares because of their symbolical importance in urban militia life. Lyon had between 36 and 39 *pennonages* up until the last third of the seventeenth century, and later only 35, but the number of parade grounds was notably insufficient; space sharing was an obligation. Two, sometimes three different wards comprised houses opening towards the same square. This situation created many difficulties during ordinary duties. Each day, two *pennonages* were chosen to guard the city at night by occupying two guardrooms and by patrolling the empty streets. The inhabitants were informed of the occurrence of their guard turn by two means. One of their officers, *l'enseigne*, would deploy his flag from his window during the

46 MONTENACH, Une économie du secret.

47 A.M.L., BB 154, f° 78, 15 March 1618, f° 190, 5 July 1618 and f° 310, 4 December 1618; BB 226, f° 167, 3 October 1670.

48 Translated by Olivier Zeller. Original text: « cette intention très louable du Consulat na pu avoir jusques a present aucun effet par les difficultez qui se sont trouvées a reduire lesdites poissonneries dans ladite halle et empescher que les colporteuses de poisson nallassent dans lesdites places, rues et carreffours vendre et debiter leursdits poissons ». A.M.L., BB 231, f° 41, 19 February 1675.

49 MONTENACH, Creating a space for themselves on the urban market, 50–68. MONTENACH, Une économie de l'ombre? MONTENACH, Espaces et pratiques du commerce alimentaire. MONTENACH, Le marché au poisson à Lyon au XVIIe siècle. MONTENACH, Entre économie légale et marchés parallèles, 285–297.

daytime. In the evening, he would walk around his territory, wearing this emblem, while the drummer beat the rally. Every inhabitant was supposed to take his own weapons and join his troop at once. Many confusions occurred when several units used a common square, offering pretexts to defiant men who preferred to stay at home. Patrols were also opportunities for conflicts because of rivalries between opposing officers. They often quarrelled about the authority upon border houses. In fact, territorial stakes were far less important than disputes of honour. Patrolling in the neighbouring *pennonage* was considered as a territorial claim, and the town counsellors had sometimes to pacify officers by fixing rules, as they did in 1658, making a drawing showing where the patrols of the Rue Buisson and Bon rencontre had to walk⁵⁰ (Figure 1).

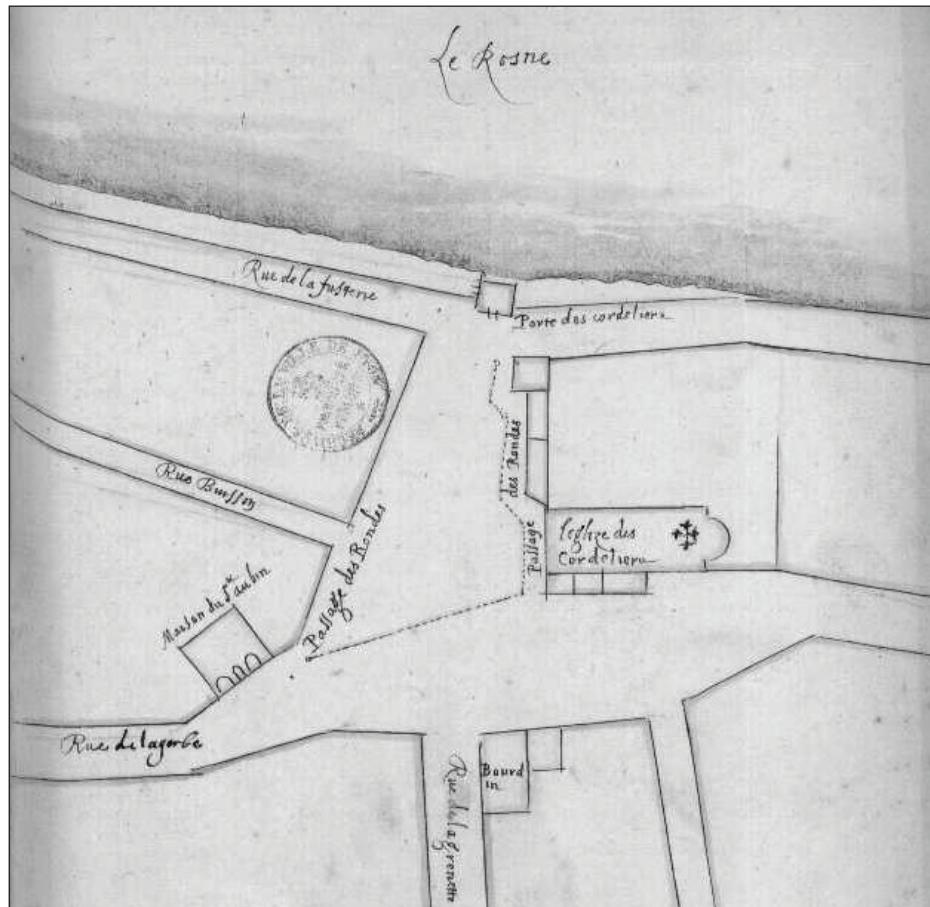


Figure 1: A territorial conflict opposing two militia units: fixed patrolling paths (1658). The indications "passage des rondes" show the respective itineraries.

50 A.M.L., BB 213, f° 458, 16 November 1658.

Most major incidents happened during festivals. Generally, the town council used to light the main fireworks in the middle of Saône bridge, then every ward had its own bonfire on its parade ground. So several fires were given on the same square. They were offered by officers, mainly by the captain, and this was for him an opportunity to show his generosity and his political loyalty, increasing thus the familial capital of honour. So, the beauty of pictures, the numbers of bombs and rockets, and the intelligence of mottos were objects of rough currency. When a royal birth was celebrated, wine barrels gave out free wine to the people. Joined to the difficulties necessarily linked to the overcrowding of tiny spaces, such conditions often lead to disorder and violence. Authorities feared popular wards like St Vincent and prohibited any organization of festivals, except official ones.⁵¹

Symbolically, parade grounds seem to have played an important role in signifying the collective identity of the militia units. This is clearly explained by the personal journal of Leonard Michon, captain of Rue Neuve from 1722 to 1746. His way of thinking appears in regard to an annual religious ceremony founded in 1722 for the celebration of the king's recovery of good health.⁵² He wrote:

The Consulate [town council], according to the orders of Mr. The Field Marshall [Governor de Villeroy], decided that the unit normally on duty this precise day would have to go to the Place des Jésuites and all around the church, instead of the Rue Neuve unit who did so last year because, it is said, one did not want to oblige the same unit to fulfil this role every year. I consider that there are pros and cons for the Rue Neuve ward. On the one hand, it is relieved of an annual obligation. On the other hand, it would be more honourable for him not to see a stranger ward coming and performing duties using its very own parade ground, which is the Place des Jésuites. It would have been better for the Rue Neuve unit to do the honours, so to say, at home, and not to leave them to strangers.⁵³

"At home", "strangers", "very own": the vocabulary clearly reveals how spatial appropriation was important in the mind of Léonard Michon.

51 A.M.L., BB 203 f° 264v°, 23 December 1649.

52 A.M.L., BB 284, f° 78, 9 August 1721; BB 285, f° 147, 24 August 1722.

53 Translation by Olivier Zeller. Original text: « Le consulat, de l'avis de Mr le maréchal, a réglé que le quartier de la ville qui seroit de garde ce jour-là se rendroit à la place des jésuites & autour de l'église, & non le quartier de Ruë Neuve qui s'y rendit l'année dernière parce que, dit-on, on n'a pas voulu assujettir le même quartier à faire toutes les années ce service. Il y a, sur cela, le pour & le contre pour le quartier de Ruë Neuve car, si d'un côté il est délivré d'une charge annuelle, d'autre part il luy seroit plus honorable qu'un quartier étranger ne vint pas faire le service dans sa propre place d'armes qui est la place des jésuites, & que ce fut le quartier de Neuve qui fit, pour ainsi dire, les honneurs chez luy & non pas les étrangers. Ne sachant donc lequel valoit le mieux des deux partis, je laissay l'affaire à la décision du consulat sans en parler en aucune façon, étant cependant en droit de le faire en qualité de capitaine pennon dudit quartier de Ruë Neuve ». LETRICOT, Rosemonde. *Édition critique numérique des Mémoires de Léonard Michon*, Université Lyon III, (CNRS, UMR 5190). Édition numérique en ligne: <http://journal-michon.symogih.org/>.

3 – Micro-urbanism and spatial regulations

3a – In charge of ruling the urban spaces, the town authority, the *Consulat*, always privileged the traffic principle. From the time of Charles IX, he could impose alignment acts in view of enlarging and straightening the streets. He could also impose a one-and-a-half foot recoil every time the facade of a house had to be rebuilt. However, he was obliged to pay damages to house owners to compensate for more sizeable recoil.⁵⁴ To improve crossroads, he also ordered the rounding of the corners of houses from the soil to the second floor, creating a solid stone *enchant*. After 1763, when this power was given to royal officers, the *Trésoriers de France*, regulations became more and more severe. House and shop signs could henceforth not be hung over the street but had to be fastened directly onto walls. Shops' folding shutters had to be replaced by rolling ones. Rules applicable to canopies, to roofs, to shop benches and stalls were strictly enforced. Even gutters had to be embedded into walls along their lower parts. So, everything was implemented to save room and enlarge the useful width of the streets.

3b – With regard to free spaces, the authorities followed two opposite options. Either they were very small, and caused to disappear; or they already marked a useful enlargement of a street or a small square, and efforts were made to improve them. Effectively, the existence of free tiny spaces posed many problems to the town council. When space was left between two houses, or along the wall of a public building or of a church, it was quickly filled with rubbish, rubble or excrement. Vacant spaces were therefore accused of public insalubrity, responsible for epidemics according to noxious air theory. Through the same cultural concepts, free space was supposed to conceal the nightly unwilling population: vagrants, villains and prostitutes. The cellars of demolished houses were said to shelter a dangerous population. This probably explains why an enclosure policy was strictly applied. Indeed, many members of the *Compagnie secrète du Saint-Sacrement* were members of the town council.⁵⁵ Several means were applied to make any wasted space disappear.

The first consisted in filling it with a tiny shop, a man or a woman receiving then a special authorization. For instance, the northern part of the *Boucherie des Terreaux* was extremely dirty, for people used to throw mud and bones along it. Small shopkeepers were allowed to create a rank of wooden shelters under condition of keeping the place clean;⁵⁶ they would be shoemakers, fruit sellers, tailors, glaziers and, very often, widows. Such permissions were also given to town employees.⁵⁷ Others were permitted to keep the surroundings of St Vincent's church clean, the vestrymen thus earning the rent of two new shops.⁵⁸ Later, the same was done in favour of the

54 GAUTHIEZ – ZELLER, Le dédommagement des recuelements, 45–74.

55 Founded in 1630 by the duke of Ventatour, the Company of the Holy Sacrament was a secret Catholic society recruiting its members among important figures, mainly justice high officers. It aimed to establish a moral public order by force and struggled against Protestants and libertines. It was a major agent of the "Grand Renfermement", imprisoning beggars, prostitutes, vagrants, blasphemers and fools. Theoretically, the Company was dissolved in 1666 by Louis XIV, but it remained active for a long time.

56 A.M.L., BB 207, f° 86, 18 February 1653; BB 211, f° 95, 16 March 1656 ; f° 208, 25 June 1656, f° 378, 7 November 1656; BB 212, f° 386, 20 August 1657 and f° 435, 12 October 1657, f° 497, 13 December 1657 and f° 554, 18 December 1657; BB 213, f° 369, 22 August 1658 and f° 637, 24 December 1658; BB 214, f° 84, 6 February 1659 and f° 103, 13 February 1659, f° 126 r°-v°, 6 March 1659, f° 552 and f° 554, 18 December 1659; BB 215, f° 267, 3 August 1660; BB 217, f° 121, 26 January 1662; BB 221, f° 67, 30 March 1666; BB 228, f° 117, 8 October 1672; BB 229, f° 128, 7 September 1673; BB 240, f° 95, 7 September 1683; BB 243, f° 54, 28 May 1686.

57 A.M.L., BB 243, f° 54, 28 May 1686.

58 A.M.L., DD 44, 28 June 1639; DD 44, 12 March 1643.

Dominicans.⁵⁹ Even the militia guardrooms were dirty. So old sergeants were allowed to use them by day to sell vegetables, having to sweep the place before the arrival of the night patrols.

The second way of getting rid of free spaces was simply to give them up to private landowners. For instance, a housing scheme realized in 1560 and 1561 had in its design little square places around each crossing of the projected streets.⁶⁰ In fact, they were used as dumps, so the *Consulat* gave eight of them away in 1657, mainly to religious orders, under the condition only of building walls. All these actions aimed to suppress any accessible vagrancy. After each house demolition, ground had to be fenced. Gardens and free spaces had to be protected by walls from one house to another, forming thus a continuous line. At night, houses' doors were to be locked. So, ideally, urban space left no room for "scandalous behaviour" and garbage laying. Even the inner parts of the ramparts were walled up. When the night patrol and its lantern arrived, nobody could – theoretically – hide himself.

3c – At the same time, the town council tried to create or to enlarge as many small squares as possible. The reasons were multiple: improving traffic conditions, freeing space for small outdoor markets, creating specialized areas as the new *place aux fils* dedicated to textiles, offering parade grounds for firefighting and militia duties, and sometimes also embellishing the city, prescribing an architectural unity as they did in the place de la boucherie Saint-Georges. The town council used several methods. Sometimes, they bought houses and demolished them at once. They could only do this with small or ruined buildings, whose value was low. Generally, they used alignment acts. When they imposed important spacings, the remaining ground would not be sufficient for rebuilding a liveable house, whose owner was then obliged to sell. In fact, the town council could do nothing but wait for opportunities. This is why several enlargements were made step by step over periods lasting several decades.

59 A.M.L., BB 208, f° 144, 12 March 1654.

60 GAUTHIEZ, La topographie de Lyon au XVI^e siècle, 26.

Table 2: Creations and improvements of small squares. Lyons, 1562–1752.

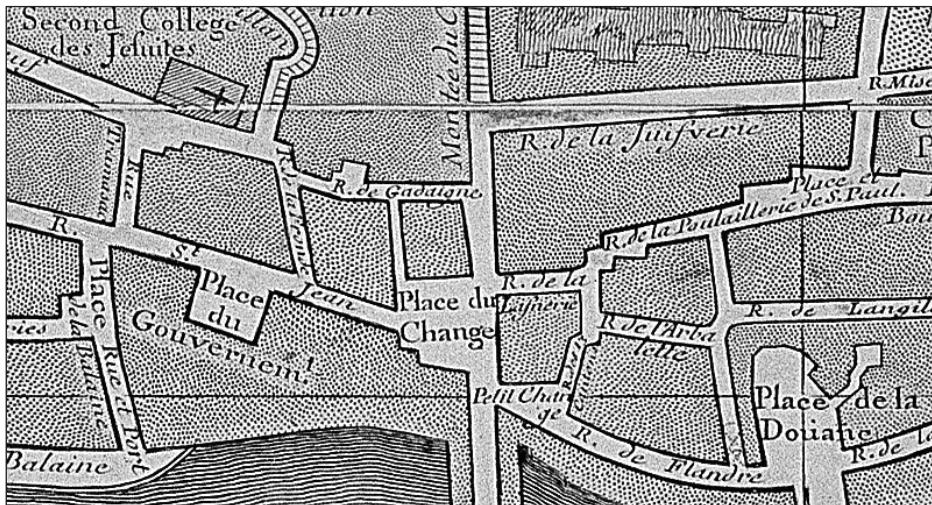
<i>Location</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Total cost</i>	<i>Employed means</i>
<i>Place Saint-Nizier</i>	1562		<i>General assembly (Protestant rule) Demolition of a block, suppression of rue de la Panneterie. Special taxation.</i>
<i>Place du Change (1st phase)</i>	1582–1585	£ 28,000	<i>Purchase of four houses, demolition.</i>
<i>Place Croix-Paquet (1st phase)</i>	1605		<i>Alignment.</i>
<i>Place du Gouvernement (1st phase)</i>	1620	£ 8,925	<i>Purchase of a ruined house, indemnity for seignioral rent, paving.</i>
<i>Place du Change (2nd phase)</i>	1631	£ 28,000	<i>Purchase of three houses, demolition.</i>
<i>Place du Grand Collège (1st phase)</i>	1646	£ 31,120	<i>Purchase of three houses, partial demolition. Indemnity for neighbors, paving.</i>
<i>Place Croix-Paquet (2nd phase)</i>	1649		<i>Purchase of a ground parcel.</i>
<i>Place de la Trinité (1st phase)</i>	1649–1652	£ 2,792	<i>Decree regarding danger property. Purchase of ruins. Purchase of two houses. Demolition Indemnity for seignioral rent.</i>
<i>Place du Gouvernement (2nd phase)</i>	1660–1662	£ 47,038	<i>Purchase of three houses, demolition, indemnity for seignioral rent, alignment, paving.</i>
<i>Place Croix-Paquet (3rd phase)</i>	1662	£ 770	<i>Alignment.</i>
<i>Place de l'Hôpital (1st phase)</i>	1662	£ 1,200	<i>Two alignments.</i>
<i>Place de la Trinité (2nd phase)</i>	1665–1670		<i>Nine alignments, levelling, backfilling, paving.</i>
<i>Place du Grand Collège (2nd phase)</i>	1670	£ 34,000	<i>Purchase of a house, partial demolition.</i>
<i>Place Saint-Georges (1st phase)</i>	1676	£ 2,775	<i>Purchase of a ruin and of a house, demolition.</i>
<i>Place de la Trinité (3rd phase)</i>	1680–1685	£ 718	<i>Two alignments.</i>
<i>Place de l'Hôpital (2nd phase)</i>	1689	£ 12,729	<i>Alignment. Purchase of three houses. Demolition, indemnity for seignioral rent.</i>
<i>Place Saint-Georges (2nd phase)</i>	1681	£ 7,325	<i>Four alignments, indemnities, paving.</i>
<i>Place Grenouille</i>	1749–1752	£ 20,500	<i>Purchase of two houses, expulsion of inhabitants, demolition.</i>

Such operations were limited by their cost. Once a house was bought, giving indemnities was necessary. Either current leases were respected, and several years were lost, or they were broken, and a sum had to be given to tenants. Overall, transforming private property into public space created huge difficulties over seigniorial rent. Henceforth, ecclesiastical landlords would not receive the rent anymore, for lack of tenants. So the town council had to liberate the ground by compensating this loss with considerable capital or by creating a correspondent rent. Materially, it was necessary to demolish (the price being lowered by selling recyclable materials), to fill old cellars, to level and to cobble the ground. Lyons having almost no sewers, the web of streets was also a hydraulic system; so creating public spaces sometimes required water channelling works.

Table 3: Surface areas of squares in Lyons c.1750. (Source: GIS Bernard Gauthiez)

<i>Côté de Fourvière (western side of Saône)</i>		<i>Côté de Saint-Nizier (eastern side of Saône)</i>	
<i>Squares</i>	<i>Surface area (square metres)</i>	<i>Squares</i>	<i>Surface area (square metres)</i>
<i>Bourgneuf, La Roche</i>	861	<i>Saint-Vincent</i>	592
<i>Boucherie Saint-Paul</i>	486	<i>Marché aux fils</i>	1089
<i>Douane</i>	1450	<i>La Feuillée</i>	936
<i>Change</i>	978	<i>Neuve des Carmes</i>	1271
<i>Gouvernement</i>	585	<i>Boucherie des Terreaux</i>	825
<i>Petit-Collège</i>	531	<i>Saint-Pierre</i>	1342
<i>Baleine</i>	473	<i>Le Plâtre Saint-Esprit</i>	844
<i>Neuve Saint-Jean</i>	595	<i>Fromagerie</i>	1076
<i>Trinité</i>	419	<i>Saint-Nizier</i>	1166
<i>Le Sablet</i>	582	<i>Grand Collège</i>	1341
<i>Saint-Georges</i>	1017	<i>Grenouille</i>	217
		<i>Hôpital</i>	686

The results of this long-term policy were limited. Enlargements were more frequent than creations and, in the middle of the eighteenth century, the average area of small squares was only 463 square meters. The real improvement concerned militia. After major strikes and riots in 1744 and 1745, the urban geography was utterly transformed. Police wards were reformed as well as militia units, whose number was reduced from 35 to 28. Henceforth, each of them finally had its own parade ground. This put an end to conflicts over space sharing. But local rivalries continued in different ways, such as the appearance of uniforms: The men composing the socially most distinguished units wore spectacular outfits and looked like hussars or pandours, while the poorest inhabitants could only dye old clothes blue. In the last years of the Old Regime, the aristocratic ward of Louis-le-Grand still displayed distinctive colours in spite of royal orders.



Map 1: Parade grounds of the militia units in Lyons, 1746.

Three conclusions may be taken from this short essay. First, the local authorities were able to apply a continuous micro-urbanism. Even if it was less aesthetic and acclaimed than political urbanism, it was able to improve segments of streets and small squares according to traffic and local life necessities. The main results were achieved during the eighteenth century; the enlargement policy enacted by 1680 town planning legislation was slowly fruitful.

Second, even though a mere wide segment of a street or of a riverbank might be named a "square" for the sake of the system, at least every urban militia unit ended up having its own parade, festival and drill ground. So the multi-polarization of space was accentuated.

Third, free space was rarely available. Every square foot had some usefulness to a trade or craft. For moral and public health reasons, the city council was very solicitous in filling-in tiny spaces. But popular culture considered other stakes. Empty zones were seen as free spaces, available for working. The best illustration can be given by two documents. The first was written in 1583. When four houses were destroyed to create the place des Changes, a crowd of women selling fruit and vegetables invaded the place as soon as it was cleared of the demolition materials, even before paving had begun.⁶¹ The second was a lament from the town councillors of 1670.⁶²

61 A.M.L., BB 111, f° 226, 17 November 1583.

62 Translation Olivier Zeller. Original text: « Les grands soings et despenses que nous avons employées à faire des places et agrandir les rues par les reculemens des maisons demeurent non seulement inutiles à lefft que nous nous sommes proposez, mais servent au contraire à donner lieu auxdits marchans et autres personnes d'embarrasser davantage les passages et d'occuper pour leur commodité particullière les espaces que nous n'avons agrandis que pour celle du public, ce qui se voit particullièrement es rues estans aux environs de l'hostel de ville ou nonobstant leur largeur, l'embarras causé par lesdits bois est tel qu'un carrosse ou qu'une charrette n'y peuvent presque passer et que mesme les maisons des particulliers ainsi que les ports voisins en deviennent la pluspart du temps inaccessibles ». A.M.L., BB 226, f° 61v°- 62, 6 May 1670.

the constant care and the important expenses we employed to create squares and enlarge streets thanks to house alignments not only become useless compared to our intents, but quite the reverse produce occasions to the merchants and other inhabitants to encumber more and more and to occupy according to their own particular convenience spaces which we only enlarged for public utilities. This can mainly be seen in the streets around the town hall where, despite their width, the bulk of wood piles is so significant that a coach or a cart can hardly pass and, often, private houses and the neighbouring doors became inaccessible.

Urban nature abhors a vacuum will be the final conclusion.

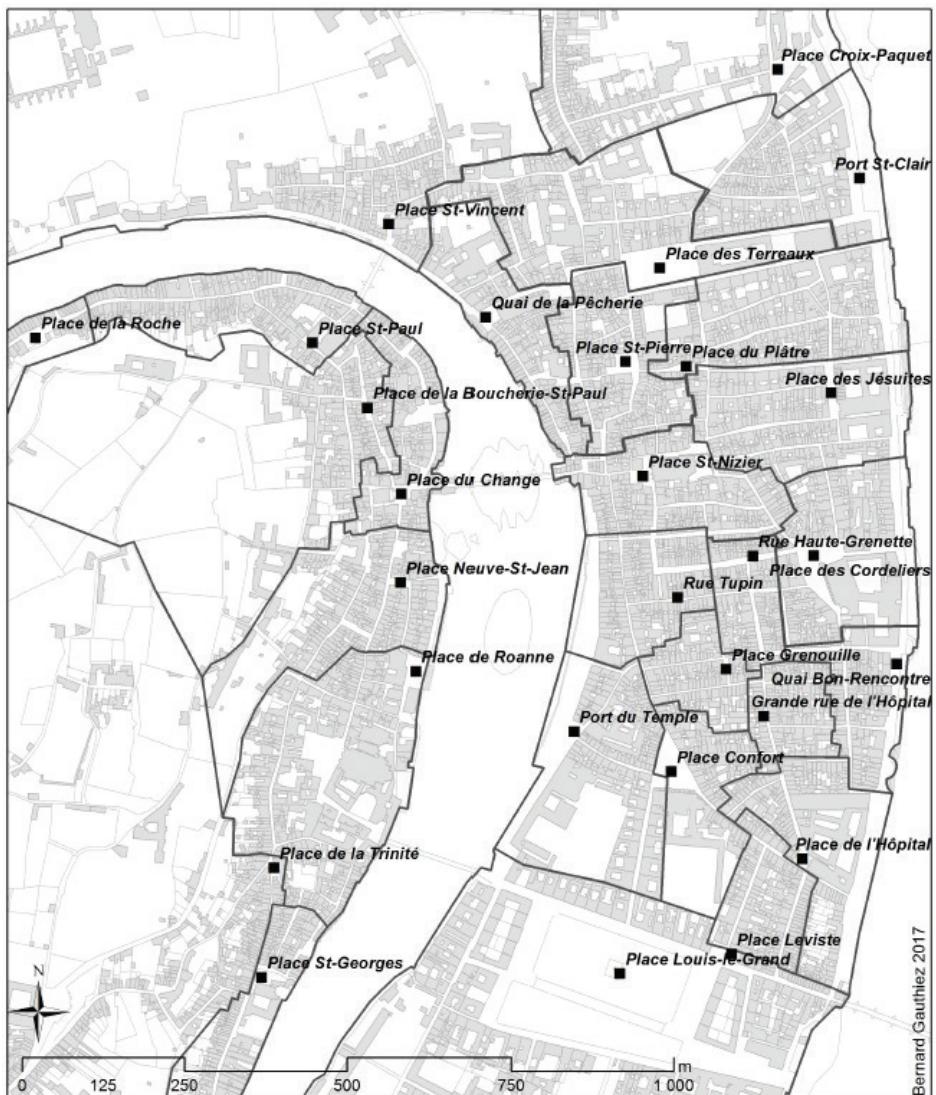


Figure 2: Small squares in 1735. Detail of the general plan of Séraucourt, 1735.

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