Foreword

This book originated in a research project I began in 1999 with my colleague, the historian Olivier Zeller, from Lyon 2 University. Our goal then was to understand how the space of a given city changes at the highest level of resolution, the scale of the building, and over long time frames, as well who the agents of the transformation are, and its social dimensions. The project is innovative in two ways. Firstly, it takes account of all the buildings produced during the period studied and within the perimeter of the city, in our case the French city of Lyons, which requires access to relevant archival sources and an appropriate mapping system – hence the use of a GIS. Secondly, it maintains the same level of detail over the entire period studied, in our case three centuries, from about 1600 to circa 1900. This approach was developed by drawing on existing methods used in quantitative history as developed by scholars like Pierre Chaunu, Jacques Dupâquier, Jean-Pierre Bardet, Olivier Zeller and others, and on the French urban history of Jean-Claude Perrot.¹ These methods were adapted to the study of the production of buildings, and completed with a geographical and architectural approach I developed during my PhD on the transformation of the urban space of Rouen, another big French city.² The English school of urban morphology, particularly with M.R.G. Conzen and Jeremy Whitehand, was also a strong source of inspiration.³ The GIS software made it possible to fully integrate these innovative methods. The problems of spatiality and temporality have led me to deal more thor-


https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110623062-001
oughly with the questions involved and to treat the data available in a more precise way. This was an ambitious undertaking, which sometimes appeared unattainable, but the results are certainly rewarding.

Once the feasibility of the project was ascertained, the field of possibilities it opened developed progressively. This was mainly thanks to the opportunity to locate information from the written record at the scale of the building, which had previously only been possible for a few buildings, but not for an entire city. Once dealing with the entirety of urban space at this level of resolution became a reality, many new investigations emerged.

The progress of the project was marked by several important steps, notably the building of the necessary databases from the archival record, the conceptualization of the units to be mapped (this is where the books begins), and the building of the methodology of the GIS (geometry of the plan, layers, spatial address system). The contribution of Olivier was crucial in identifying serial sources on the building scale, and in the constitution of several databases. Three of the papers published over this twenty year project here form the basis of Part I and Part II, where the arguments of the articles have subsequently been greatly developed.⁴

The project was made possible by funding from several institutions. Initially, it was financed by the Ministère de la Recherche through its Action Concertée Incitative Ville, which allowed me to build the first phase database on the building permits from 1645 to 1763, and to carry out tests of the mapping methodology (which greatly evolved thereafter). There then followed funding from the Région Rhône-Alpes over several years through its Cluster 13 and ARC 5 research projects, when the main bulk of the work was carried out.

This book would not have been possible without funding from several other institutions: Université Lyon 3 Jean-Moulin and its subsidiary Lyon3-Valorisation; the research unit of which I am member (Unité Mixte de Recherche du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique n° 5600 Environnement, Ville, Société) and its sub-unit within Université Lyon 3 (Centre de Recherche en Géographie et Aménagement). Henry Dicks has done an indispensable job in correcting and editing my original text, making sure the English is correct and reads fluently. Finally, I am grateful for the help of the Erfurt Space-Time Research Group housed

in the University of Erfurt, led by Professor Susanne Rau, and for the opportunity the editors have given me to publish this book as part of the collection Spatio-Temporality / RaumZeitlichkeit.