



PaTHs



UCLouvain



# « The Charter's Spaces: Spatial and Spatiographic Analyses of Diplomatic Sources », University of Namur, 10-11 October 2024

The *Diplo21* network (<https://diplo21.hypotheses.org/>) organises scientific meetings to provide young researchers working on diplomacy and written practices in medieval Europe with a forum for scientific dialogue and debate, independent of national historiographical traditions. The first theme chosen is 'the charter's spaces'. The particular aim of this conference is to show how diplomacy fits in the spatial turn taken by the humanities and social sciences since the 1970s and 1980s.

We propose three lines of research. The first is to examine the spatial logic of the production of deeds, namely the geography of chancelleries, writing offices and registries, but also the places where charters were dated and what they may reveal about the negotiations between the authorities and the beneficiaries of the deeds, as well as a possible "deeds market" (theme No. 1). Attention will also be paid to the way in which diplomatic sources reveal the perceptions that their authors or beneficiaries had of space, through the study of adjacent property clauses, of spatial or territorial vocabulary and of topographical logics determining the order in which goods, rights and revenues were listed (theme No. 2). Finally, participants will be invited to consider the deeds themselves as 'places' and to question the place of graphic symbols in relation to the text, the way in which this is rendered or neglected when copying the deeds, particularly in cartularies, and the means available to them for modelling the charters' space (theme No. 3).

## 1) Spatialising the charters' production process

a) The evident question this theme raises in diplomatic concerns the localities where deeds, charters and diplomas, whether public or private, were drawn up: chancelleries, writing offices and registries. The staff who worked there provokes our interest, as well as the organisation and work methods of these institutions, the formularies they used and how these evolved. The question of a redaction by the beneficiaries leads us to consider other places, in particular the *scriptoria* of monasteries and chapters. Participants are invited to investigate the geography of redaction, on the scale of a whole kingdom but also on a much more local level. The question of the circulation of typical expressions and formularies between institutions opens another field of research that can be seen in a new light by means of network analysis and other possibilities offered by digital humanities, in particular geographic information systems.

b) Charters' eschatocols sometimes include "place dates" (*Actum Atrebatii*, *Datum apud Pruvinum*, etc.). These have often been used by historians to retrace the itineraries of kings and princes, which has led to a better understanding of their government and administrative

practices, both in the Carolingian era and at the end of the Middle Ages<sup>1</sup>. The formulation of these place dates has already been studied in their chronological and regional variations<sup>2</sup>. The question has already been raised whether this was the place of the princely approval or the place where documents were drafted or delivered – which was the subject of a fierce debate between Ferdinand Lot and Léon Levillain. More recently, Jean Dufour has put forward the hypothesis of a difference between “the royal approval given to the legal act (*actum*) and the delivery of the written act (*datum*)”<sup>3</sup>. Place dates keep record of the localities and, within these localities, the buildings or other specific places where the legal actions described in the charters took place and were put down in writing, or where the charters were given to their beneficiaries. These place dates therefore reflect the spatial logics that shaped the drafting of the charters and, in particular, the reasons why beneficiaries chose to come to one place rather than another to request the drafting of the documents or to have them delivered to them<sup>4</sup>. While taking into account the symbolic dimension of the choice of certain places, it is also important to consider other, more prosaic reasons, some of which are spatial or circumstantial: the frequency or rarity of the stay of a prince in a given place, the geographical origin of the beneficiaries, the localisation of their property, the urgency of their *petitio*, the nature of the act in question, etc. Other parts of the diplomatic discourse (preamble, dispositive clause, *extra sigillum* notes, etc.) may also contain information on the places where the transactions were negotiated or concluded, where the deeds were drafted and handed over to their beneficiaries, with or without ceremony. Some *notitiae* have even a narrative character, highlighting places and providing information about the “charter’s travels”, from the initial negotiations to its handing over.

c) Some transactions were recorded in writing before a public notary or *tabellio*. In 1395, for example, the inhabitants of Bar-sur-Aube preferred to go to La Ferté-sur-Aube, some twelve miles distant, to have a contract drawn up, because they found their town’s *tabellio* too expensive<sup>5</sup>. Here again, the question is in how far network analyses and GIS can help us to gain new insights in this diverse “deeds market”.

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<sup>1</sup> As there is a considerable bibliography on this subject, we simply refer to Martin GRAVEL, « Déplacements et immobilités des souverains carolingiens. De l’Empire au royaume de Francie occidentale », dans *Le gouvernement et le déplacement. Pouvoir et mobilité de l’Antiquité à nos jours*, dir. Sylvain DESTEPHEN, Josiane BARBIER, François CHAUSSON, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2019, p. 213-234, as well as *L’itinérance de la cour en France et en Europe : Moyen Âge-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, dir. Boris BOVE, Alain SALAMAGNE, Caroline ZUM KOLK, Villeneuve d’Ascq, Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Chantal SENSÉBY, « La “date de lieu” et ses variations du X<sup>e</sup> au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle en Anjou et en Touraine », dans *La formule au Moyen Âge [III]*, éd. Olivier SIMONIN et Caroline DE BARRAU, Turnhout, Brepols, 2021, p. 149-170.

<sup>3</sup> Jean DUFOUR, « État et comparaison des actes faux ou falsifiés intitulés au nom des Carolingiens français (840-987) », *Fälschungen im Mittelalter, IV : Diplomatische Fälschungen (II)*, Hanover, Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1988, p. 167-210, especially p. 169 (« l’approbation royale donnée à l’acte juridique (*actum*) et la délivrance de l’acte écrit (*datum*) »).

<sup>4</sup> Thomas LACOMME, « *Actum Pruvini*. Les chartes provinoises d’Henri le Libéral : présence du comte à Provins et origine des bénéficiaires », *Bulletin de la Société d’histoire et d’archéologie de l’arrondissement de Provins*, no 174, 2020, p. 5-23.

<sup>5</sup> Isabelle BRETTHAUER, « Le marché de l’acte au Moyen Âge : tarifs, prix, concurrence », *Genèses*, n° 105, 2016/4, p. 8-35.

## 2) Diplomatic sources and spatial (re)constructions

a) While redacting charters, scribes and notaries often had to describe lands and other real estate. They needed to know how to “measure land”<sup>6</sup> and have a “sense of boundaries”<sup>7</sup>. Adjacent property clauses (*confronts*) can be studied in this way, making use of the new methods offered by the digital humanities, as is exemplified by the study of medieval urban cadastres<sup>8</sup>. In addition to studying formulations and technical vocabulary, we should deepen our understanding of the ways in which diplomatic sources contributed to the construction of space and bear witness to the way in which space was perceived, arranged, and even reconstructed according to the interests of the authorities or beneficiaries.

b) The order in which properties, rights and revenues were listed in the privileges summarising and confirming the temporal rights of churches, as well as the classification of deeds in certain cartularies, may reflect topographical logics (by dioceses, archdeaconries, granges, towns, etc.) and correspond to the “experienced space” (*espace vécu*<sup>9</sup>, i.e. itineraries for tax collection or episcopal visits, etc.) or to a “mental space”<sup>10</sup>, specific to each dictator, cartularist or institution<sup>11</sup>.

c) Lastly, the place names cited in the deeds can be used to spatialise socio-political or cultural phenomena. The emergence of “territories”<sup>12</sup>, for example, the “projection space of an institution” (Max Weber), whether ecclesiastical or secular, as well as the centres of act production to so-called “Romanesque”<sup>13</sup> buildings have been studied in this way. In diplomatics, the evolution of the vocabulary used for ‘space’ in the deeds can be examined, as well as the question whether diplomatic sources present here any specificities in relation to other types of medieval sources. Following in the footsteps of other researchers, participants will also be able to ask if by diplomatic or documentary developments changes in the spatial dimension of *dominium* and, more broadly, in the perception and representation of space in the Middle Ages can be retraced<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Mireille MOUSNIER, « Mesurer les terres au Moyen Âge. Le cas de la France méridionale », *Histoire & Sociétés rurales*, t. 22, 2004/2, p. 29-63.

<sup>7</sup> Hadrien PENET, « Le sens des limites. Construction et perception de l’espace dans les actes de la pratique : l’exemple sicilien (XII<sup>e</sup>-XV<sup>e</sup> siècles) », dans *Construction de l’espace au Moyen Âge : pratiques et représentations*, dir. Thomas LIENHARD, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 2007, p. 405-411.

<sup>8</sup> Élisabeth CARPENTIER, « Le traitement informatisé des plus anciens *catasti* : le problème des confronts », dans *Les cadastres anciens des villes et leur traitement par l’informatique*, Actes de la table ronde organisée par le Centre d’histoire urbaine de l’École normale supérieure de Saint-Cloud, éd. Jean-Louis BIGET, Jean-Claude HERVÉ, Yvon THÉBERT, Rome, École française de Rome, 1989, p. 255-268.

<sup>9</sup> Armand FRÉMONT, *La Région, espace vécu*, Paris, PUF, 1976.

<sup>10</sup> Chantal SENSÉBY, « Espace rêvé, espace convoité. Le témoignage des cartulaires monastiques », dans *Territoires rêvés [2]. Du territoire rêvé au rêve de territoire : stratégies et processus d’appropriation ou de domination*, Orléans, PU, 2006, p. 37-45.

<sup>11</sup> Paul BERTRAND, Xavier HÉLARY, « Constructions de l’espace dans les cartulaires », dans *Construction de l’espace au Moyen Âge...*, p. 193-207.

<sup>12</sup> The concepts “territory” and “territorialisation” have been widely used in medieval history for a number of years. Here we only refer in an exemplary way to Florian MAZEL, *L’évêque et le territoire. L’invention médiévale de l’espace (V<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, Paris, Seuil, 2016.

<sup>13</sup> Nicolas PERREAUX, « Des structures inconciliables ? Cartographie comparée des chartes et des édifices « romans » (X<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles) », *Bulletin du centre d’études médiévales d’Auxerre*, hors-série n° 9, 2016, en ligne.

<sup>14</sup> Pierre CHASTANG, *Lire, écrire, transcrire : le travail des rédacteurs de cartulaires en Bas-Languedoc, XI<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris, Éditions du CTHS, 2001 ; ID., « Du *locus* au *territorium*. Quelques remarques sur l’évolution des catégories en usage dans le classement des cartulaires méridionaux au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle », *Annales du Midi*, t. 119, 2007, p. 457-474.

### 3) Acts treated as ‘spaces’

a) Medieval charters were validated by a number of graphic symbols: chrisma, subscription crosses, monograms, *rota*, chirograph legends, notarial marks, etc. These have already attracted the attention of researchers<sup>15</sup>. The parchment on which the charter is written can then be considered as the ‘space’ in which these signs are represented: their size, shape and evolution, but above all their ‘location’ on the parchment can thus be analysed and compared.

b) When forging pseudo-originals or redacting cartularies, the graphic signs of the originals may be reproduced or imitated. The way in which this is done, with greater or lesser care, with or without modification, and their position on the pseudo-original or in the cartulary, may reveal some of the intentions of the forgers and cartularists. In doing this, one needs to consider the skills required for such imitations of graphic symbols with varying degrees of complexity.

c) Finally, participants are invited to think about graphic representations and space modelling in charters and cartularies. They can draw inspiration from the chorematic method used by geographers to obtain spatial models, and thus think about a comparable method for modelling the ‘space’ of diplomatic sources and bring out new documentary typologies by examining the charters global layout, including the formatting of the text (first lines capitalised, witness lists arranged in columns or rows, the use and elaboration of capitals, etc.) and the graphic symbols mentioned above.

#### How to submit

This call is aimed primarily at young researchers working on diplomatic and the practice of writing in medieval Europe. Papers should take no more than twenty-five minutes and will be followed by a discussion. They may be submitted in English, French, German or Italian. Papers should be between 3,000 and 4,000 characters in length (with spaces) and should specify with which of the lines of research presented above the align most. They should be accompanied by a short biography (10-15 lines) indicating affiliations and recent publications, followed by the researcher’s contact details. These documents must be sent before **12 April 2024** to: [contact.diplo21@gmail.com](mailto:contact.diplo21@gmail.com).

#### Organising Committee

Hannes Engl (Aachen), Thomas Lacomme (Université de Namur, FNRS), Émilie Mineo (Université du Luxembourg), Robin Moens (RWTH Aachen University, Université de Namur), Nicolas Ruffini-Ronzani (Université de Namur, Archives de l'État) and Timothy Salemme (Université du Luxembourg) as core members of the *Diplo 21* network : <https://diplo21.hypotheses.org/>.

#### Conference details

The conference will take place on 10 and 11 October 2024 at the University of Namur. Papers are accepted in German, English, French and Italian. Participants’ travel and accommodation costs are probably covered.

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<sup>15</sup> Peter RÜCK, *Graphische Symbole in mittelalterlichen Urkunden. Beiträge zur diplomatischen Semiotik*, Sigmaringen, J. Thorbecke, 1996.

