

POLLEN20

September, 22-25, 2020

*Session: Plant spaces, Vegetal places,  
Placing vegetal life in urban political ecology*

***Rethinking vegetal places around the city :  
the case of street gardens in Lyon (France)***



**GRENOBLE  
ECOLE DE  
MANAGEMENT**  
TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

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# What is the problem ?

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There is a growing desire for nature in cities (Bourdeau Lepage & Vidal, 2012). City is THE ideal level to act on local and global problems...

Conceptual framework : Cities are following a neo-liberal logic (Peck, Tickell, 2004) and are mainly conceived by technocrats

Citizens are deprived from their spaces (Lefebvre, 1974). They develop their own actions to take it back

Difference between lived space “space where social relations take place and where we actively experience it in everyday life” and conceived space “is a place for the practices of social and political power; in essence, it is these spaces that are designed to manipulate those who exist within them”. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 222).

**We want to show how street gardens is a way to promote lived space by residents and how they appropriate urban spaces (produced by the city and deciders)**

# What is a street gardens ?

## Street gardens

- Gardens that are part of public spaces, installed by residents and that are accessible to everybody
- Wild herbs emerging from the concrete, flowers on the space between a habitation and the pavement or flowers / vegetables in a trail, managed by residents



Jardinières de rue, 3ème





Street garden Montchat



Street garden Paul Bert



Street garden Montchat



Street garden Montplaisir



Street gardens in Saulaie (Oullins)

# Why are those gardens interesting ?

- They are created on public spaces and can be seen as an overflowing of private spaces in / on public spaces
- They mobilize both individuals and non-formal groups and can be seen as collective gardening,
- They are quite discrete but remains at the center of different interests (appropriation, gardening, neighborhood planning, social...)



# Methodology

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- 20 interviews with street gardeners,
- 11 interviews with institutional actors: elected, technicians, Space Green Direction...
- 4 observations on different street gardens at their first collective events (plantation)
- Secondary data: charts of street gardens, newsletters of collectives and associations

# What is the story of street gardens in Lyon ?

Started in 2002, after Luc and its services visited Rennes (and their operation “Green our walls”) and make a trip to Canada.

- Luc is gardeners for the city and members of an association which asked for a shared gardens. During the wait, they converted some urban spaces (like tree foot) into street gardens
- Inspiration : Tanaka gardens in Tokyo (Merlin, 2008), sidewalk gardens (Haas, Olsson, 2016) of San Francisco and gardens of Montreal, and others:
  - In a way, the book “Ruins of Rome” worth a look. In literature, you have Tissetout Green Thumbs also, which pictures a kid who have the power to make plants grow fast. He transforms the city by making plants grows everywhere: the green destroys existant structures. (Luc MIF 5<sup>th</sup> district, June 2018)

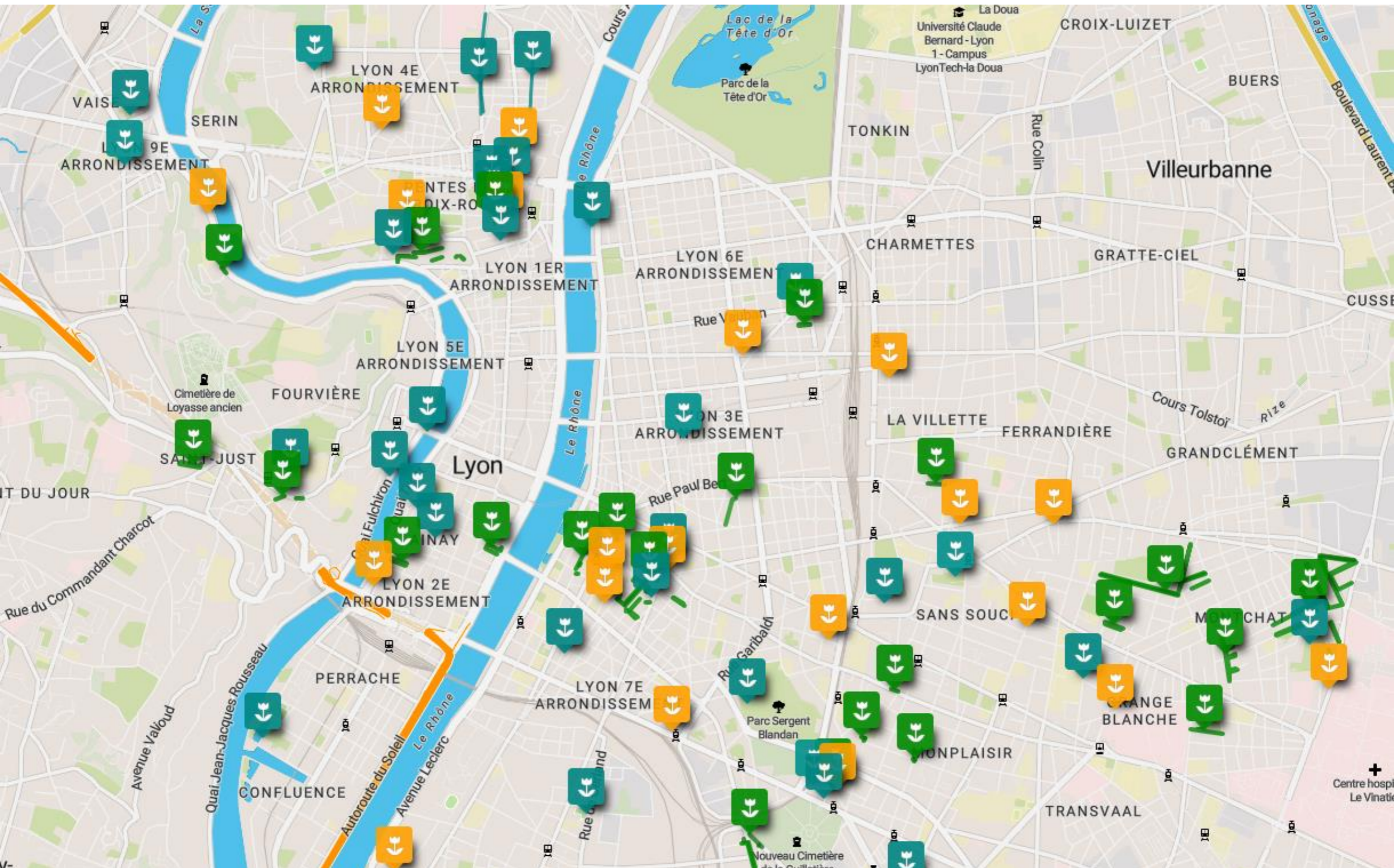
**2003.** Luc and his association discussed with municipality to develop those street gardens on their district

**2005.** A second street is planned with street gardens (third district), by a group of citizens who have met Luc

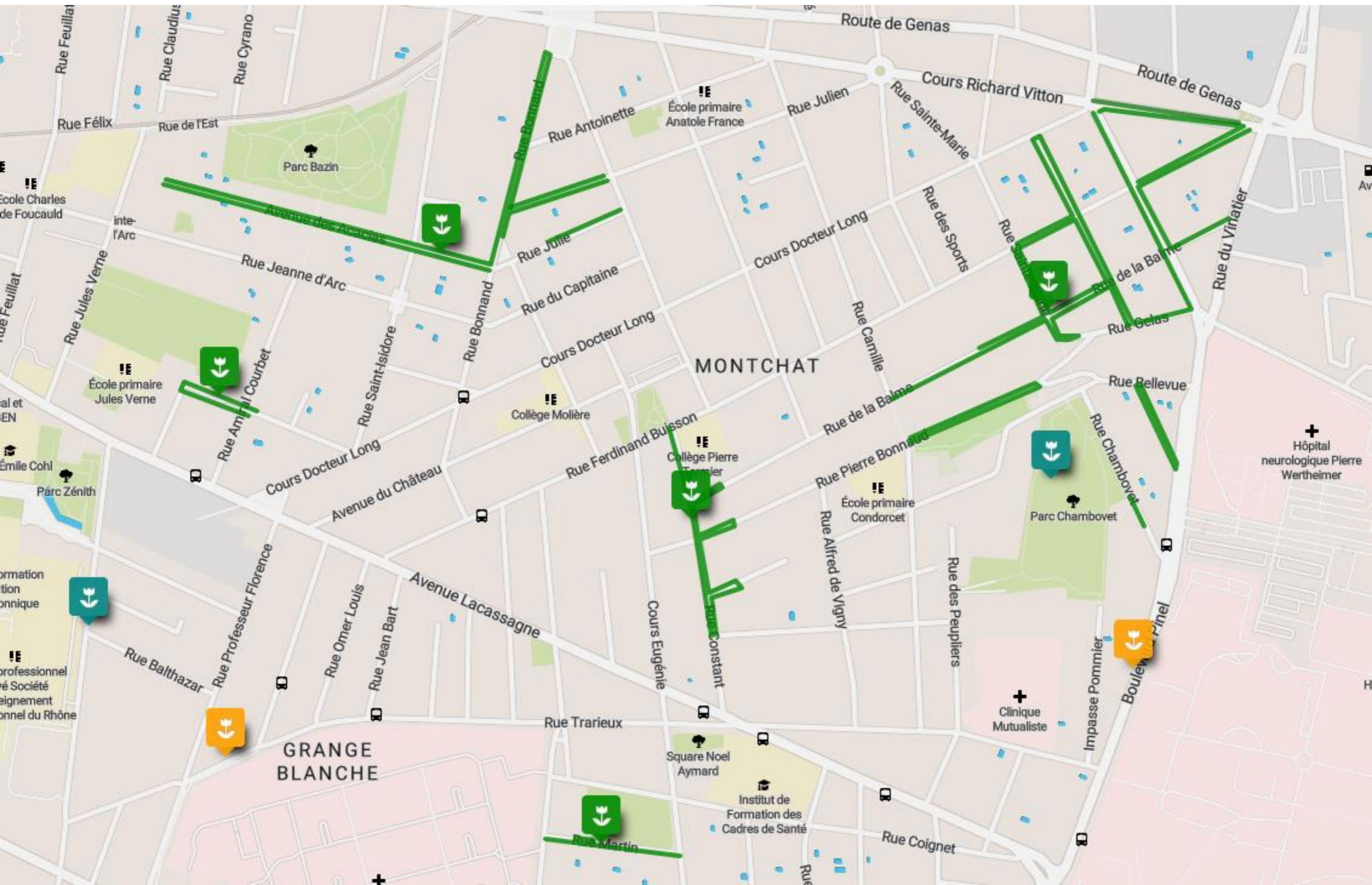
**2006 & 2008 :** Street gardens festival In the 8<sup>th</sup> (third street and more) organized by a group of residents

Today it is **900** street gardens on Lyon, and a job (part time at the Green Space Direction) is dedicated to manage those street gardens

# Geographical distribution of street gardens







a closer look on a neighborhood (8th district)

# SG as a conceived space

Street gardens are managed by Green spaces Direction (one person, part time), who gather the citizen's demands and plan necessary work

Citizens have to form a group with their neighbor to formulate a demand

A company intervene to dig holes in the pavement

It appears as a plastic and landscape approach: *“the basic approach is plastic, we want to create a harmony in the neighborhood, between the concrete and the nature, plants..”* (Luc MIF 5th district, June 2018)

At first glance, we are in a planned and institutional approach – where citizens are secondary

Also, street gardens can be objects for communication – institutionalization of Street gardens ?



# SG as a lived space

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But street gardens are far more than just a conceived space, like community gardens

It's not just gardening : it is communication, friendship with neighbors, but also street appropriation

For example, residents clean their part of the street, they organize collective gardening sessions, they water street gardens for their neighbor...

Informal practices : some install their own pocket gardens (box), some plant their seed, without asking permission

They invest the front of their residence / house, with non conceived practices

*« Here with the help of my neighbor, we planted few climbing plants and we water them alternatively.. We didn't ask permissions for these... » (Lucie, street gardeners)*



# Confronting different visions

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Cities workers sometimes don't know about street gardens and can destroy them

Urban planners are afraid that residents will give up their street gardens + danger to construction

In their vision, residents are only subordinate in urban planning

For citizens, gardening is a way to claim their « right to the city » : to participate, to arrange their street, to decide for the future of their direct environment...

Street gardens act as witnesses of a participative urban era, where cities will become « places of hope » (Harvey, 2000)



# Conclusion

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Street gardens are an urban hybrid forms, between institutions and citizens

Street gardens as a product of a « participative urban era », with citizens that go beyond their role

Citizens claim their « right to the city » by shaping their neighborhood and taking decisions

Development of « durable citizens » (Lipovsky, Frazer, 2003) ?

But there is still confusion around public and private : does these gardens belong to residents ? Or are they still a product of institutions ?

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# Thanks

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