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a field report on the co-existence of various infrastructural covers, containers, and enclosures in the streets of Autun, France.

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everyday structures.
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Located underneath or alongside the roads and paths of Autun, France, manhole covers, utility enclosures, and other containers represent entry points into the infrastructures around which cities, including small, historic cities with origins extending back to the Roman empire such as Autun, are organized. Considering the common, public elements of these infrastructural networks as components of a city or necessitates a reconsideration of what a city is, to include the many flows of people, goods, information and resources whose respective and often intermingled systems stretch far beyond any individual city’s territorial, political boundary. These infrastructural covers, enclosures, and signage are embedded within and alongside Autun’s streets, an interface with the material and digital flows that keep the city connected, watered, heated, cooled, entertained, cleaned, organized, and so on.

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What follows is a small selection chosen out of about 100 photos taken within a few blocks of Hotel les Ursulines on the hillside above Autun Cathedral in a half-an-hour lunchtime walk that the Lancaster University (UK) sociologist Elizabeth Shove and I took on Friday 20 July 2012. Elizabeth and I were in Autun for a conference, *From networked to post-networked urbanism: new infrastructure configurations and urban transitions*, organized by Laboratoire Techniques, Territoires et Sociétés (LATTS), a technology, infrastructure and society research organization based out of Paris. The paradox of having discussions on urban infrastructures and *post-networked*, or as some participants put it, *supra-networked* urbanism at a conference held in a small city surrounded by Burgundian wine country led to our quick exploration of the things that connected Autun to the larger networks and flows that stretch across its region and beyond. We wanted to visualize what made Autun as much a part of a supra-networked urbanism as, for instance, Paris. Just as roads and other transportation networks connect Autun to places beyond the city itself, so do the other infrastructures we found embedded in the streets. In looking closely at these iron and steel covers, fiberglass and plastic boxes, small and large junctions, and cables of many sizes and colors, we found a whole culture of design and manufacture, maintenance, and repair of these quotidian things that are typically passed by and over the way between places. Elizabeth later uncovered that “PAM/Saint Gobain [pictured on page 3] makes manhole covers used in Autun, Paris, Saxmundham (a small town in East Anglia, UK) and Lancaster”. Networks of different historical eras, many different providers, and various systems are all intertwined in organized as well as haphazard ways, grafted alongside older buildings and walls, integrated into newer structures, and even, sometimes, waiting for a future use, as is the case with the coiled wire sits protruding out of the stuccoed wall on page 6. The systems may change, evolve, or be removed, but these infrastructural things are as much a part of Autun as any other aspect of the landscape from the homes and businesses to the agriculture in the fields surrounding the city.

Pages 3 and 4 detail horizontal covers for water and gas systems. (Note how the wavy design of the cover on the top left of page 4 holds gravel and sands like a rill on a creek-bottom.) Pages 5, 6, and 7 highlight the vertical: boxes both freestanding and built into walls, protruding telecommunication conduit empty of cables, do-not-dig signs for the gas utility, trash cans, a fire hydrant, a lamp post fabricated in Germany, a mailbox, a recycling drop-off point, as well as what appears to be a marker for a buried electrical cable surrounded by two kinds of ivy.

Thanks to Olivier Coutard and Jonathan Rutherford of LATTS for inviting me to participate in the conference in Autun.

-Alan Wiig
Philadelphia
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Looking east on Rue Raquette at a pavement patchworked by utility cuts likely to install and maintain various infrastructures. Autun, France. July 2012