

# ***De*-prefixed spatial Ps in medieval French**

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We examine a series of medieval French spatial Ps with *de*- prefixes (*de*-forms; e.g. *dessus*, *dedans*), showing that they display a combination of preposition-, adverb- and noun-like syntactic properties which distinguish them from their corresponding base forms (e.g. *sus*, *ens*). We argue that these properties can best be accounted for by considering *de*-forms to be modifiers of a null PLACE noun. Finally, we suggest that during the medieval period, *de*-forms are reanalysed as nouns, which causes wide-ranging changes in their distribution, including the development of complex prepositions such as *au-dessus de*.

**Keywords:** Old French, preposition, spatial adverb, locative, *de*- prefix, particle

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The aim of this paper is to account for the properties and subsequent development of a series of spatial Ps with a *de-* prefix (henceforth ‘*de-*forms’) in medieval French:

- (1) *deça* ‘on this side’, *dedans* ‘in(side)’, *dehors* ‘out(side)’, *dejuste* ‘beside’, *dejus* ‘below’, *delà* ‘on the other side, beyond’, *delez* ‘beside’, *derrière* ‘behind’, *desor* ‘on (top)’, *dessous* ‘under’, *dessus* ‘on top, above’, *devant* ‘in front’, *devers* ‘towards’

As documented in detail by Sävborg (1941), these forms derive in Vulgar or even Classical Latin from a reanalysis of the preposition *de* ‘from’ and (in most cases) a locative adverb — for example *intus* ‘in’, *super* ‘above’, *subtus* ‘under’ — and are first attested denoting the source of motion. The earliest attested example is found in Cæsar’s *De Bello Gallico*:

- (2) [...] *militēs qui in phalangas insilirent*  
soldiers.NOM who in battalions.ACC leap.IPFV.SBJV.3PL  
*et scuta manibus revellerent et*  
and shields.ACC hands.ABL wrench.IPFV.SBJV.3PL and  
*desuper vulnerarent*  
**from.above** wound.IPFV.SBJV.3PL

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‘[...] soldiers, who leaped upon the phalanx, and with their hands tore away the shields, and wounded the enemy from above.’

(Cæsar, *De Bello Gallico*, I, 52,5; cited by Sävborg 1941:65)

As Sävborg (1941) notes, the original source-of-motion interpretation is greatly weakened in Late Latin texts such that *de*-forms may also be used in contexts without movement, while by the medieval French period *de*-forms function almost exclusively as locatives (cf. Papahagi 2002).

In medieval French, the unprefix<sup>2</sup> spatial Ps from which these *de*-forms were originally derived (henceforth ‘base forms’) continue to be attested with a similar or identical meaning:

- (3) *ens* ‘in(side)’, *hors* ‘out(side)’, *joste* ‘beside’, *jus* ‘down’, *lez* ‘beside’, *arrière* ‘behind’, *sor* ‘on’, *sous* ‘under’, *sus* ‘on top, above’, *avant* ‘in front’, *vers* ‘towards’

The differences between these two series of forms are often considered to be simply phonological. For example, Buridant (2000:482) suggests that *de*-forms derive from a process of phonetic reinforcement (“*étoffement*”), and does not identify any substantial syntactic or semantic differences between *de*-forms and base forms.

The primary goal of this paper is to propose an analysis of *de*-forms according to current theories of the split PP, and in particular the contributions in Asbury et al. (2008) and Cinque and Rizzi (2010). We begin by outlining the distinctive syntactic properties of *de*-forms as observed in a

<sup>2</sup> The forms *arrière* and *avant* are not unprefix, deriving respectively from *ad* ‘to’ + *retro* ‘back’ and *ab* ‘from’ + *ante* ‘front’; however, they show a similar relationship to the *de*-form as do other unprefix forms.

corpus of medieval French (section 2). We then review analyses proposed in the literature for similar phenomena in section 3, before arguing in section 4 that the properties of *de*-forms are best accounted for if they are analysed as modifiers of a null PLACE noun. Finally, we will suggest that the emergence of new complex prepositions such as *au-dessus de* during the medieval period is caused by a reanalysis of *de*-forms as nouns.

## 2. Data

The data presented in this paper are drawn from a corpus of 21 texts (1.4 million words) in the *Base de Français médiéval* (BFM 2016) covering the period 1100-1500.<sup>3</sup> From this corpus, we extracted all tokens of seven of the most frequently attested *de*-forms and their corresponding base forms (see table 1) on which we have based our quantitative analysis. Examination of the corpus data shows that *de*-forms share an unusual set of distributional properties which make them difficult to categorize. We divide these properties into simple preposition-like properties (section 2.1), adverb-like properties (section 2.2) and noun-like properties (section 2.3).

**Table 1.** Overall frequency of base forms and *de*-forms in the texts examined.

<sup>3</sup> Our corpus includes the following texts from the BFM: roland, comput, Lapidal, oxfps, bestiaire, DescrEngl, Lapidfp, brut2, cambps, ErecKu, CligesKu, CharretteKu, YvainKu, PercevalKu, qlr, qgraal\_cm, beauma1, moree, melusine, baye1-2, commynes1-8. For further details the reader is referred to the corpus bibliography (<http://txm.bfm-corpus.org>) and to Rainsford (accepted).

Form	Tokens (base form)	Tokens (de- form)
<i>arrière/derrière</i>	91	189
<i>avant/devant</i>	733	1926
<i>ens/dedans</i>	133	628
<i>hors/dehors</i> <sup>4</sup>	562	174
<i>sous/dessous</i>	237	285
<i>sur/desur</i>	3024	122
<i>sus/dessus</i>	374	406
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5154</b>	<b>3730</b>

When referring to the two objects related by these locatives, we follow the convention in cognitive linguistics (e.g. Talmy 1985) in using the term *Figure* to denote the located object and *Ground* to denote the object with respect to which it is located, thus in the sentence *the book is on the table*, *the book* is the Figure and *the table* is the Ground.

### 2.1 Preposition-like properties

All *de*-forms may take a DP complement expressing the Ground, as illustrated below by *dehors* and *dessous*:

- (4) *defors sun cors veit gesir la buele /*  
**outside his body** sees lie the gut  
*desuz le frunt li buillit la cervele*  
**below the brow** him.DAT boils the brain

‘He sees his guts lying outside his body, below his brow his brains bubble out.’ (*roland*, p.168, l. 2246–2247)

4 Includes tokens of the variant forms *fors* and *defors*. *Fors* (but not *hors*) also occurs as a grammaticalized conjunction meaning ‘except’: these tokens are excluded from the study.

This property is clearly shared by the base forms *sur* and *sous*, and to some extent by *hors* and *sus*. Of 21 tokens of *hors* with a DP complement, all but two are from later texts in the corpus (after 1250), while the 123 prepositional uses of *sus* are concentrated in just two of the 21 texts examined (*qgraal* and *moree*).

## 2.2 Adverb-like properties

All *de*-forms are also attested without a DP complement, illustrated here again with *dehors* and *dessous*:

(5) *povre estoit la robe dehors /*

poor was the dress **outside**

*mes desoz estoit biax li cors*

but **underneath** was beautiful the body

‘On the outside her dress was shabby, but underneath her body was beautiful.’ (*ErecKu*, p. 3d, l. 409–410)

Such intransitive uses are also attested for most of the corresponding base forms: the exceptions are *sous* and, for the most part, *sur*,<sup>5</sup> which both require DP complements. Given the apparent similarity in their distribution, it is important to consider whether *de*-forms are simply variants of the base forms, as is often suggested. On the one hand, there are cases in which a *de*-

<sup>5</sup> Use of *sur* without a DP complement is very rare (8 of 3024 occurrences), restricted to the texts composed before 1200, and requires a distinct disyllabic form *sore*.

form and a base form occur in identical contexts, as in example (6) where a base form and a *de*-form are coordinated with a gapped verb:

(6) *je serai            anz    et    vos   defors*

I be.FUT.1SG **in**    and    you   **outside**

‘I’ll be inside [this prison] and you outside.’ (*CharretteKu*, p.44b, l. 4514)

On the other hand, a closer examination of the distributional patterns of the two types of forms reveals some significant differences. Based on a statistical analysis of the present corpus, Rainsford (accepted) shows that the base form is strongly preferred to the *de*-form when used as a complement to a motion verb. In our corpus, base forms collocate regularly with specific motion or caused motion verbs, thus we find, for example, 28 tokens of *traire hors* ‘pull out’ (7) but not a single one of *traire dehors*:

(7) *comandez            les    chevax   fors   treire /*

command.IMP.PL the    horses   **out**   **draw**

*et   metre   frains   et   anseler*

and   put    reins    and   saddle.up

‘Order the horses to be brought out, and reins and saddles to be put on them.’ (*CharretteKu*, p.28a, l. 242–243)

This finding supports the claim that base forms should be classed as particles, i.e. generally intransitive spatial Ps forming a semantic unit with the verb (cf. Burnett and Tremblay 2009:29), a claim which has been made not only for medieval French (cf. Dufresne, Dupuis and Tremblay 2003,

Burnett and Tremblay 2009, 2012, Troberg and Burnett 2017) but also more widely for cognate forms in other Romance languages.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, when we look more closely at some of the other properties typical of medieval French particles identified by Burnett and Tremblay (2009), it is clear from our data that *de*-forms do not share them:

- Idiomatic verb–particle constructions such as (8) are not attested with *de*-forms, which retain a locative meaning in this context (9):

(8) *je ne voel pas qu' après demain*

I not want not that after tomorrow

*m' an metoiz sus ne ce ne quoi*

me en **put.PRS.2PL** on nor this nor what

‘I don’t want you to accuse me after tomorrow of all manner of things.’ (*YvainKu*, l. 6628–6629)

(9) *et la puldre est bone a arsun et*

and the powder is good to burn and

a eschauldeure si hom la **met desus**

*to scald if one her puts on*

‘And the powder is good for putting on burns and scalds.’ (*Lapidfp*, p. 102)

- The combination of *avant* or *arriere* with a non-motion verb gives rise to an aspectual interpretation (10), but this is not found with the equivalent *de*-forms *devant* and *derrière* (11):

6 Cf. Iacobini and Masini (2006), Masini (2006), Cini (2008), Iacobini (2009) for modern Italian; Acedo-Matellán and Mateu (2013) on the transition from Latin to Old Romance.



(10) *mes faites nos avant conter /*

but make.IMP.PL us **onwards** tell

*ce qu' il avoit encomancié*

this that he had started

‘But go on telling us about what he had started.’ (*YvainKu*, p. 79f, l. 102–103)

(11) *saciez, de tel mestier / servent li losengier /*

know.IMP.PL of such job serve the flatterers

*ki bien dient devant / deriere vunt mentant*

who well say **in.front behind** go lying

‘You see, such is the job of flatterers: those who on the face of it say good things are concealing lies behind it.’ (*bestiaire*, p.99, l. 2743–2746)

- There are very occasional examples of base forms which denote direction of motion even when not combined with a motion verb, but *de*-forms do not appear to be attested in such contexts. (We observed the following example in the BFM although no such structures occur in our corpus):

(12) *durement huce : “laissies m’ ens !”*

loudly yells let.IMP.2PL me **in**

‘She yells loudly “Let me in!”’ (*eracle*, l. 4227)

In short, despite the existence of some similar uses (e.g. 6), base forms should be analysed as particles expressing the path of motion while *de*-forms are locatives expressing place.

### 2.3 Noun-like properties

Given their non-nominal etymology, it is striking the *de*-forms also show a number of noun-like properties, although not all such properties are attested consistently across the timespan of the corpus. A first such property is that all *de*-forms occur as complements to the simple preposition *par* ‘by, through’. Such structures are attested both with (13) and without (14) a DP complement:

- (13) *et par desoz a la reonde / coroit une eve*  
 and **by below** at the round ran a water  
*si parfonde / roide et bruianz come tanpeste*  
 so deep powerful and noisy like storm  
 ‘And all around the base [of the castle] very deep water flowed,  
 loud and powerful like a storm.’ (*ErecKu*, l. 5325–5327)

- (14) *il l' abat maintenant mort par desoz*  
 he it strikes.down now dead **by under**  
*mon seignor Gauvain*  
 my lord Gawain

‘Now he strikes it [=the horse] down dead from under my lord  
Gawain.’ (*qgraal\_cm*, p.206d)

We consider this a “noun-like” property since elsewhere, spatial *par* generally selects DP complements, e.g.:

- (15) *qant li autre trainé furent / et li manbre par*  
when the others dragged were and the limbs **by**  
*le chanp jurent / lors recomance li assauz*  
**the field** lay then restarts the attack

‘When they [=the traitors] had been dragged [behind horses] and  
their limbs lay strewn across the battlefield, the attack begins  
again.’ (*CligesKu*, 59f, l. 1497–1499)

Moreover, locatives other than *de*-forms and deictic adverbs such as *ci* ‘here’ and *la* ‘there’ do not generally appear as a complement to *par*. Exceptions to this rule are rare: in our corpus, we find a total of 11 tokens of *par* used with other locatives of various types,<sup>7</sup> all from the earlier texts (12<sup>th</sup> century), as compared to 449 tokens of *par* with a *de*-form complement. We also find 60 cases of *de*-forms preceded by an initial *de* in our corpus. These “double *de*” forms must be analysed with care, as in some cases (12 out of 60 in our corpus) the extra *de* has no obvious syntactic function and is often transcribed as a second prefix in modern editions:

- (16) *l’ ewe de Sebre el lur est dedevant*  
the water of Ebro she them.DAT is **de.in.front**

<sup>7</sup> *Par sur* DP (3 tokens), *par sus* DP (1 token), *par en sum* DP ‘on top of’ (2 tokens), *par entre* DP ‘from between’ (2 tokens), *par entour* DP ‘around’ (1 token), *par selonc* DP ‘along’ (2 tokens)

‘The water of the Ebro, it’s there in front of them.’ (*roland*, p.186, l. 2465)

However, in 17 cases, the initial *de* is a separate preposition denoting the source of motion (17), while in the remaining 21 cases the *de*-form is a complement to a nominal (e.g. 18).

(17) *comment la serpente se party de dessus la*  
how the snake REFL left **from atop** the  
*Tour Poitevine*  
tower Poitevin

‘How the snake left the top of the Poitevin tower.’ (*melusine*, p. 288)

(18) *à la verité ceulx de dedans et de dehors se*  
at the truth **those of inside** and **of outside** REFL  
*entendoyent bien*  
heard well

‘In truth, the defenders and the attackers heard each other clearly.’  
(*commyn5*, p. 89)

There is no general requirement for an extra *de* in such contexts, as example (19) shows:

(19) *cil defors, quant le virent / isnelepas fuïrent*  
**those outside** when it saw quickly fled

‘The attackers, when they saw it, fled at great speed.’ (*comput*, p.13, l. 677)

While cases of a second *de* marking the source of motion are found throughout the corpus, it is notable that forms such as (18), in which a second *de* is used when the *de*-form modifies a nominal, are mainly found in the later texts (18 of the 21 are from the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries), which suggests a change in the status of the *de*-form. We return to this question in section 4.2.

Finally, *de*-forms in the medieval period also appear as part of complex prepositions (e.g. *au dessus (de)*) with the following general structure:

(20) *au/el/en + de-form + (de + Ground DP)*

In these “P-*de*-forms” the noun-like properties of the *de*-form are even clearer: the definite article is often used (e.g. *au* ‘at.the’ or *el* ‘in.the’) and the Ground complement is not a DP but a PP introduced by *de*. These forms are not especially common in our data, and are rarest in the earlier texts: of 147 tokens in total, only 23 date from before 1250. Curiously, none of these pre-1250 tokens of P-*de*-forms are used with a spatial meaning. As De Mulder (2003) points out in his study of *au-dessus de*, the earliest attestations of this construction are used exclusively to refer to having or gaining a superior position in combat or in a battle, as in the following exchange between two knights before a duel:

(21) *ja ne m' aït Diex, fet Lyon, se je ja*  
 ever not me help.SBJV God makes Lyon if I ever  
*ai merci de vos que je ne vos ocie se je en*  
 have mercy of you that I not you kill if I of.it

*puis venir au dessus*

can come **to.the** **above**

“May God never help me”, said Lyon, “if ever I should give you mercy and not kill you if I am victorious.” (*qgraal\_cm*, 206a)

Eight such tokens of *au-dessus* in pre-1250 texts are found in our data. In addition, all six tokens of *au-desore* (all pre-1250) are synonymous with *au-dessus*, while the seven pre-1250 tokens of *au-dessous* have an opposite combat-related meaning ‘to be vanquished’<sup>8</sup>:

(22) *quant il se voit si au desouz si a poor*

when he REFL sees thus **at.the** **below** thus has fear

*de morir*

of die

‘When he sees that he is defeated, he is afraid he will die.’

(*qgraal\_cm*, 205d)

Although not attested in our corpus, a search of all the texts in the BFM shows that early tokens of *au devant* also have the combat-related meaning ‘in front and opposing’:

(23) *messagiers frere di Guion l’ Aleman /*

messenger brother tell Guy the German

*armer se voist et puis si voist el champ /*

arm REFL go.SBJV and then thus go.SBJV in.the field

*li cuens Guillelmes li sera **al** **devant***

<sup>8</sup> These forms account for 21 of the 23 pre-1250 tokens of P-*de*-forms. The two remaining tokens are of *au-dehors* (1) and *au-derrière* (1) from which it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions.

the count William him.DAT be.FUT **at.the in.front**

“Brother messenger, tell Guy the German to go and arm himself and come out into the field of battle: Count William will face him in combat.” (*louis*, l. 2454–2456)

In fact, we do not find unambiguously locative examples of *au-dessus* in our data before the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, for example:

(24) *Et estoit la fontaine en un fier et merueilleux*

and was the fountain in a fearsome and wonderful

*desrubaux, et avoit grans rochers au dessus*

ravine and had big rocks **at.the above**

‘And the fountain was in a fearsome and awe-inspiring ravine, and there were great rocks above it.’ (*melusine*, p.23)

Outside the complex prepositional structures, we do not generally find the *de*-form with a definite determiner. An exception is the clearly non-spatial use of *devant* to mean ‘a person’s lap’:

(25) *dunc vient a la pulcele / si baise sa mamele /*

thus comes to the girl si kisses her breast

*en sun devant se dort / issi vient a sa mort*

in her **in.front** REFL sleeps thus comes to his

death

‘And so he comes to the girl, kisses her breast, and falls asleep in her lap; and thus his life comes to an end.’ (*bestiaire*, p. 16, l. 407–410)

Taken together, these data present a puzzling picture. First, *de*-forms, which etymologically are unrelated to nouns, show a number of noun-like properties. Second, as far as we can judge from the corpus data, the most noun-like of these uses (i.e. the P-*de*-forms and the clear nominalization *le devant*) are first attested with non-spatial meanings.

### **3. Previous relevant analyses**

Spatial Ps that show noun-like properties are well documented in the syntactic literature.<sup>9</sup> Although a number of different analyses have been proposed, which vary substantially both in the hierarchy of projections assumed within the split PP and in the mechanics of the derivation of complex prepositional expressions, we can nevertheless distinguish two main approaches to noun-like spatial Ps. First, in an approach formalized in particular by Svenonius (2006, 2010), they can be analysed as “axial parts”: noun-like elements base-generated in a dedicated functional projection within the split PP. Second, following Kayne’s (2004) analysis of the deictics *here* and *there*, they can be analysed as modifiers of a silent noun PLACE. We will examine these approaches in turn.

9 Cf. Svenonius (2006), Cinque (2010), Terzi (2017) on the general phenomenon, Roy (2006) on modern French, Fábregas (2007) on Spanish, Botwinik-Rotem (2008) on Hebrew, Pantcheva (2008) on Persian, Svenonius (2010) on English, Terzi (2010) on Greek and Spanish.



### 3.1 Axial parts

Svenonius (2006) argues convincingly that although noun-like elements in complex prepositions are usually morphologically identical to nouns, they should in fact be analysed as “axial parts”. Following Jackendoff’s (1996) definition, such axial parts, such as the *top*, *bottom* or *front* of an object “have no distinctive shape [...]; they are regions of the object (or of its boundary) determined by their relation to the object’s axes” (1996:14). In terms of syntactic structure, Svenonius (2006, 2010) suggests that complex prepositions such as English *in front (of)* or *on top (of)* consist of a Place head (*on*, *in*) dominating an AxPart head *top*, *front*:

(26) [<sub>PlaceP</sub> in [<sub>AxPartP</sub> front [<sub>KP</sub> of [<sub>DP</sub> the car ]]]] (Svenonius 2006:59)

Although derived from nouns, the axial parts in these prepositions have undergone a semantic shift such that instead of denoting a part of the object itself, they denote “a space defined with reference to that part” (Svenonius 2006:49). In the case of *in front of*, *front* does not denote the front surface of the Ground, but rather a space *outside* the Ground projected from its front surface:

(27) The boxes were **in the front of** the shop. (*front* is a noun)

(28) The boxes were **in front of** the shop. (*front* is an axial part)

As shown by Roy (2006), modern French complex prepositions such as *à l’intérieur de* ‘inside’, *au fond de* ‘at the bottom of’ and *à côté de* ‘next to’

have a similar structure, with the nominal element (*intérieur, fond, côté*) being analysed as an axial part.

A particularly relevant analysis of Romance prepositions within Svenonius' (2006) axial parts framework is provided by Fábregas (2007),<sup>10</sup> who examines Spanish Ps formed both with a *de-* prefix and an *a-* prefix (e.g. *atrás/detrás* 'behind', *abajo/debajo* 'below'). Fábregas proposes that the base and the prefix in these forms lexicalize separate heads within the split PP: the base (i.e. *trás* and *bajo*) is an axial part, while the prefix *de-* surfaces as the specifier of the highest head within the split PP (2007:16). The fact that, unlike in English, it is the non-locative preposition *de* which occurs as a prefix is related through a complex mechanism to the fact that the Ground complement is realized as a possessor, either as a full DP introduced by the preposition *de* (29) or as a possessive pronoun (30):

(29) *el libro está delante de la mesa*  
the book is **of.front of the table**

'The book is in front of the table.' (Fábregas 2007:3)

(30) *el libro está delante suyo*  
the book is **of.front his**

'The book is in front of him.' (Fábregas 2007:4)

Fábregas also notes that, in contrast to the examples discussed by Svenonius (2006), the axial part in Spanish is not normally nominal but is instead "a semantically heavy preposition" (2007:18). However, he claims that these

<sup>10</sup> We would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for bringing this paper to our attention.

elements are also in some way noun-like, although the evidence is rather tenuous: Fábregas notes that forms such as *bajo* can be used as the base for derived words such as *bajar* ‘to go down’, and argues that this behaviour is unexpected for a purely prepositional element (2007:18).

### 3.2 Null PLACE noun

An alternative approach to locative prepositions builds on Kayne’s (2004) analysis of the deictics *here* and *there* in English and supposes that locative expressions contain a phonetically null noun PLACE, and that the overt spatial “P” is in fact a modifier of the noun.<sup>11</sup> Terzi (2010, 2017), arguing primarily on the basis of Greek data, notes that P elements show a similar distribution to adjectives in the DP, and moreover that the Ground complement, if realized as a clitic, takes the genitive case typical of complements of nominals. Interestingly, Terzi (2010) extends this analysis to offer an alternative view of Spanish *de*-forms, where the complement also shows morphology typical of a possessive construction, as shown in examples (29) and (30) above. Adopting Bernstein’s (2005) analysis of possessive structures in Spanish, Terzi (2010) proposes the following structure for Spanish *de*-form PPs:

(31) [<sub>PP</sub>loc [<sub>P</sub>loc Ø [<sub>DP</sub> [PLACE *dentro*]<sub>i</sub> [<sub>D</sub> *de* [<sub>AGR</sub>P *su oficina* [<sub>QP/NP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> ]]]]]]] (Terzi 2010:210)

11 Cf. Cinque (2010), Noonan (2010) on German, Terzi (2010) on Greek, Botwinik-Rotem (2008) on Hebrew.

In this view, the modifier *dentro* and the null noun PLACE together form a NP, which following Bernstein (2005) raises to Spec,DP in possessive constructions, triggering the realization of *de* in D for Case reasons (2005:58). While Terzi does not explicitly compare her approach to that of Fábregas (2007), in our view the core conceptual difference lies in the deeper explanation for the noun-like properties of the P element. In the axial part approach, it is sufficient to say that such forms are simply tagged in the lexicon as “axial parts” (Fábregas 2007:19), and the question of how and why non-nominal elements may develop into axial parts is largely left unanswered: Svenonius (2006:73–74) and Roy (2006:111, note 9) explicitly leave this question open for further research. In the null PLACE approach, nominal properties are in principle inherent in *all* spatial Ps, since they are analysed as modifiers of a null PLACE noun. Terzi (2010) makes an exception, however, for prepositions with very basic semantic content such as Greek *se* ‘to, at, on’, which are treated as heads lexicalizing the Ploc head in (31).

#### **4. The analysis of *de*-forms in medieval French**

Let us recap the properties of medieval French *de*-forms discussed in section 2, paying close attention to those properties which seem to be associated with either the earlier or the later texts:

1. Throughout the time period *de*-forms are used as spatial Ps either alone or with a DP Ground complement (the Spanish pattern of *de*-form alone plus overtly marked genitive is never attested).
2. Throughout the time period, *de*-forms do not show the same properties as their base forms, which either require a DP Ground complement (*sur, sous*) or function as particles.
3. Throughout the time period, *de*-forms appear as complements to the preposition *par* and to *de* indicating the source of motion.
4. *De*-forms are found in P-*de*-form (*de*) constructions, in particular in the later texts. The earliest tokens of these constructions are rare and have a non-spatial meaning.

#### 4.1 The analysis of *de*-forms

Our hypothesis for the underlying structure of *de*-form locatives is given in (32) below:

- (32)  $[_{PPloc} \emptyset [_{DP} [_{NP} \textit{dedans PLACE} ([_{KP} [_{DP} \textit{la cit\acute{e}} ]])]]]$   
 ‘inside (the city)’

First, we follow Terzi (2010, 2017) in assuming that locative structures feature a null PLACE noun modified by the *de*-form. The principal advantage of this approach over the axial part analysis that it provides a principled explanation for the noun-like properties of spatial Ps which are not etymologically nominal. Second, unlike Fábregas (2007) we do not

assume a separate syntactic status for the *de-* prefix. This would imply that the base forms themselves were axial parts and thus that they should show some of the noun-like properties of axial parts discussed by Svenonius (2006), a hypothesis contradicted by the medieval French data. Considering first the particle base forms *ens*, *hors*, *sus*, *avant* and *arriere*, it is clear from the discussion in section 2.2 that they are strongly associated with motion verbs and as such it is rather more likely that they lexicalize Path (cf. Burnett and Tremblay 2012).<sup>12</sup> Turning to *sur* and *sous*, we suggest that these should be classed alongside *à* ‘at’ and *en* ‘in’ as P heads encoding basic spatial relations of the kind proposed by Svenonius (2010:133) and Terzi (2010:205). We would therefore posit a simple structure such as:

(33) [<sub>Pl<sub>oc</sub></sub> *sur* [<sub>DP</sub> *le pont* ]]

One piece of evidence in favour of this hypothesis is the morphological split in the forms derived from Latin *super*. Alongside the (irregular) unstressed development to the transitive P *sur* (later *sur*), our data also show a regular, stressed development to the disyllabic P *sore* or *seure*. Where such a morphophonological split occurs in other areas of the grammar, such as between *me*, *te*, *se* and *moi*, *toi*, *soi* in the personal pronoun system, it reflects a underlying syntactic distinction: the unstressed form is a head (e.g. a clitic pronoun) while the stressed form remains a full XP. Extending such

<sup>12</sup> However, we do not exclude the possibility that the base forms were modifiers of a null PLACE noun during the pre-textual period when the *de-*forms first emerged. Indeed, their reanalysis as particles was possibly triggered by the semantic bleaching of verb prefixes in late Latin, cf. Iacobini and Masini (2006).

an analysis in this case would lead us to conclude that *sor* is a P head rather than a modifier of a null PLACE noun.

Third, we follow the assumption in the literature that the Ground DP is realized as a possessor, and base our proposal on Arteaga and Herschensohn's (2013) analysis of the structure of Old French possessives. One clear difference between medieval French and modern Spanish is the lack of overt possessive marking on the Ground DP. However, unlike modern Spanish or indeed modern French, medieval French did have a morphological case system until the 14<sup>th</sup> century, overtly distinguishing nominative and oblique case. While it is true that the system was not particularly robust even in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries — most feminine DPs were never case marked and in western dialects the whole system broke down well before the 14<sup>th</sup> century (cf. Schøsler 2013) — there is nevertheless clear evidence that it had an effect on the syntax of possessives, since we find possessive constructions marked only by the use of oblique case (the 'juxtaposition genitive' (JG)):

(34) *demain an vandra avoec moi /*

tomorrow *an* come.FUT.3SG with me

*vostre fille a la cort le roi*

your daughter to **the** **court** **the.OBL** **king.OBL**

'Tomorrow your daughter will come with me to the king's court.'

(*ErecKu*, p. 5f. l. 1309–1310)

Arteaga and Herschensohn (2013) assume that the possessor DP in such structures occurs within a Case phrase (KP) and that the K head bears a [+obl] feature which values the uninterpretable Case feature on the NP, an analysis we adopt in (32) above.

Associating the initial development of transitive *de*-forms with the existence of JG structures seems a promising approach. Transitive *de*-forms are found from the earliest texts, and would therefore appear to be a pre-textual innovation. This is important, since possessive constructions in which Case is assigned by an overt *à* or *de* preposition show a far wider distribution in medieval French texts than the JG, which is already limited to [+human, +definite] possessor DPs in earlier texts (cf. Arteaga and Herschensohn 2013: 35) and which disappears completely by the end of the medieval period. We must therefore assume that at the time transitive *de*-forms developed, the JG was available more widely. Moreover, we would predict that new complex prepositions which arise *during* the medieval period will take a PP rather than a DP complement. We would also predict that in Romance varieties in which JG structures are not attested historically, *de*-forms with a DP Ground complement will not arise. To the best of our knowledge, both of these predictions are correct, although further research is clearly needed.



#### 4.2 The reanalysis of *de*-forms

The most striking development over the course of the medieval period is the emergence and increasing frequency of P-*de*-forms. Given the analysis proposed in (32), an obvious initial hypothesis would be to assume that very little has changed syntactically. The *de*-forms would have exactly the same status within these complex prepositions as they do when used alone, i.e. as modifiers of a null PLACE noun, with the null preposition realized by a semantically basic simple preposition (*à* or *en*):

(35) [<sub>PPloc</sub> *à* [<sub>DP</sub> *le* [<sub>NP</sub> *dessus* PLACE ([<sub>PP</sub> *du chastel* )]]]]

Such an analysis, however, poses more questions than it answers. First, it is unclear for what reason the null preposition (and indeed the determiner) in the structure proposed in (32) should have come to be phonetically realized. Second, it is unclear why the Ground complement should suddenly require the overt Case marker *de*. Third, such an analysis fails to account for the semantic differences between early P-*de*-forms and the corresponding *de*-forms.

De Mulder (2003:295) suggests that the creation of P-*de*-forms presupposes the reanalysis of the “adverbial” *de*-form as a noun. Despite our differing views on the nature of *de*-forms, we believe this claim to be fundamentally sound, and suggest that the reanalysis in question involves the elimination of the null PLACE noun. Indeed, the trigger for such a reanalysis possibly

lies in structures in which the *de*-form appears as complement to the preposition *par* (cf. section 2, example 13 above) and therefore shows the surface distribution of a DP:

(36) a. **Initial analysis:** [<sub>PPloc</sub> *par* [<sub>DP</sub> [<sub>NP</sub> *dessous* [<sub>N</sub> PLACE ]]]]

b. **Reanalysis:** [<sub>PP</sub> *par* [<sub>DP</sub> [<sub>NP</sub> [<sub>N</sub> *dessous* ]]]]

‘underneath’

(37) [<sub>PP</sub> à [<sub>DP</sub> *le* [<sub>NP</sub> *dessus* ([<sub>PP</sub> *de la bataille* )]]]]]

‘in the victorious position (of the battle)’

As shown in (37), the P-*de*-forms are new constructions built around nominal *de*-forms and rather than using the obsolescent JG construction, Case on the possessor Ground DP must be assigned by an overt preposition. Moreover, the lack of a null PLACE noun means that P-*de*-forms are not limited to a primarily locative meaning.

There is also evidence in our data that the new analysis is slowly extended to existing structures. Before reanalysis, *de*-forms are contained within a PP (cf. 32), and as such can occur as complement to a nominal, e.g. *cil dedans* ‘those inside the city, the defenders’ (cf. 19). After reanalysis, nominal *de*-forms require an overt preposition in such contexts, such that in our data *cil dedans* is generally replaced by *ceux de dedans* by the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century (cf. 18). Moreover, in the latest text in our corpus, even the definite article is extended to this expression:

(38) *ce temps pendant que ledict duc mist à venir*  
 this time during that the.said duke put to come

*quelquing de ceulx du dedans se advisa*

someone of **those of.the inside** REFL noticed

‘In the time that it took the duke to arrive, someone among the defenders noticed.’ (*commyn3* p. 64)

If this hypothesis is on the right track, one development which remains curious is the subsequent emergence of spatial uses of P-*de*-forms which have been generalized in modern French. For example, the first listed meaning of *au-dessus* in the TLFi is ‘above’, and the medieval combat-oriented meaning is no longer listed. Working in the framework of grammaticalization theory, De Mulder (2003:297) suggests that this may be attributed to a further reanalysis in which *au-dessus de* becomes analysed as a single complex preposition, which in turn may be related to the loss of transitive *de*-forms in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, a more detailed examination of the data from 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century texts is required in order to better understand this later change.

## 5. Conclusion

We have argued that *de*-forms in medieval French are best analysed as modifiers of a null PLACE noun, showing how this analysis accounts for their distribution in particular in the earlier part of the medieval period and also for the differences attested between *de*-forms and corresponding base

forms, which are analysed either as particles encoding Path or as simple prepositions. Subsequently, we have proposed that during the medieval period *de*-forms are reanalysed as nouns, a change which triggers the development of new complex prepositions (P-*de*-forms) with initially non-spatial meaning.

Our analysis seeks not only to account for the medieval French data, but also to provide a series of hypotheses regarding the possible development pathways of *de*-forms across the Romance languages. In particular, we have suggested that a juxtaposition genitive construction is required for *de*-forms to develop transitive uses, which implies that the historical unavailability of such a construction limits *de*-forms either to intransitive use (as It. *di sotto* ‘underneath’) or to use with a PP complement (as Sp. *debajo (de)* ‘underneath’). We have also argued that the emergence of P-*de*-forms is linked to a reanalysis which eliminates the null PLACE noun, which implies that such constructions will emerge with non-spatial meanings. Testing these hypotheses against a wider data set remains a subject for future research.

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