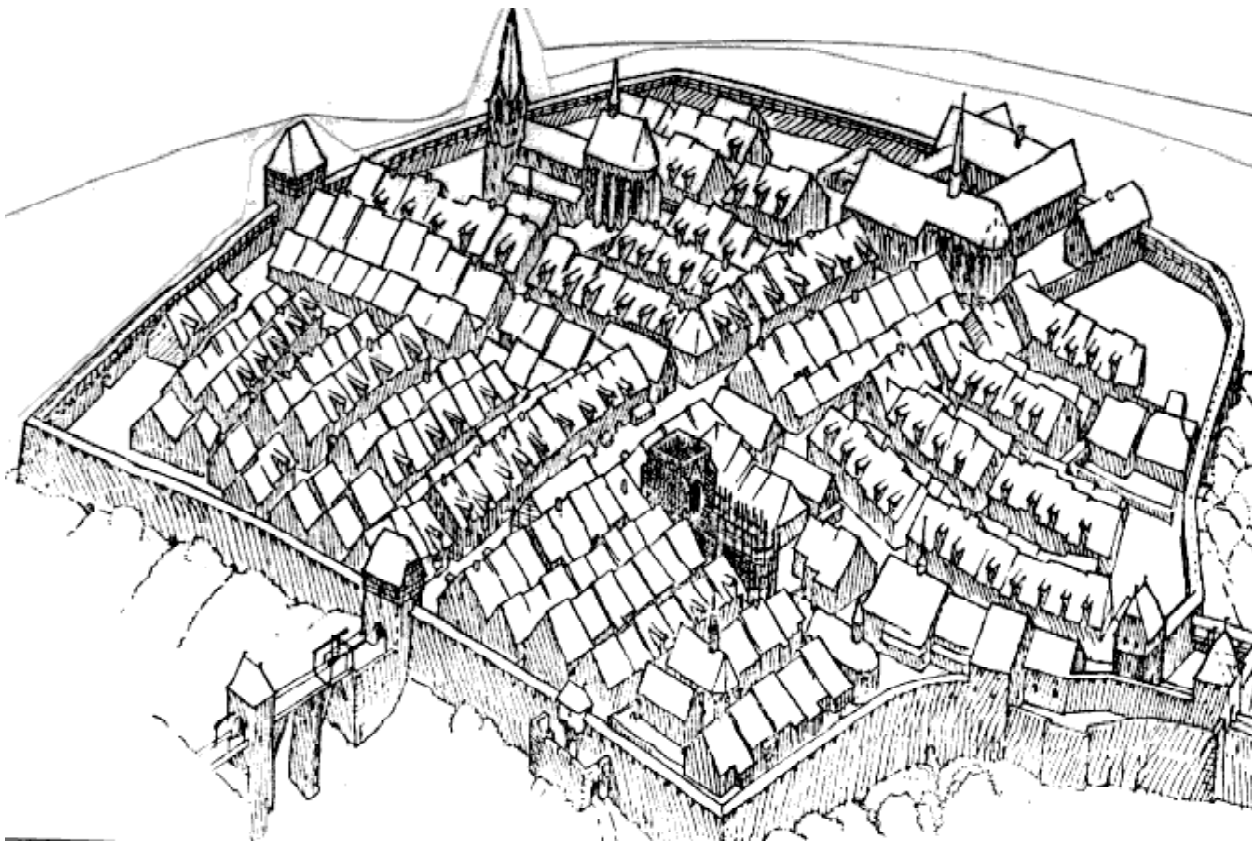


## **PART 4 - Medieval Cities**

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The eclipse in the European civilization between the fall of the Roman Empire in the West (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries) and the re-emergence of activity in the Early Middle Ages (10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries), is known as the **DARK AGES**.

A period of tribal migration which saw the break-up of the Mediterranean economy and the end of Ancient World). The urban ideal of the antique world came to an end with the sacking of Roman towns by barbarian invaders (3<sup>rd</sup> century onward), th whom the urban culture of Hellenic and Roman tradition meant little.



Rottweil, Germany  
12<sup>th</sup> century Zähringer New Town

Henri Pirenne in his classic text "Medieval Cities", maintains that:

- (a) Barbarians did not go into Empire to destroy it, they came to possess warmer, **easier life of cities** nearer the Mediterranean, on which the Empire was based.
- (b) **Lacking experience of urban life**, they did not run cities as well as the Romans did, nor did they like them.
- (c) Trade, moreover, declined from other causes. Nevertheless a measure of civic life and trade continued to exist. **Islam** ultimately destroyed the ancient world, not as often suggested, the German invaders alone.
- (d) Dark Ages came, bringing with them the **extinction of civic life**, when the Arabs, inflamed by their new Islamic faith swept around east and southern shores of Mediterranean and brought trade of western Europe to a standstill. Ties between eastern and western Europe were cut.

Western Europe was forced to live on its own resources. Cities decayed and did not recover until the Mediterranean routes re-opened and trade revived. This coincided with the next great silver discovery according to Patterson (geochemist at Caltech).

### **European Towns During the Dark Ages**

*The Barbarian Invasions caused:*

- 1 the general destruction of Roman cities (except in Spain);
- 2 townsmen, having lost urban livelihood, to move to the safer countryside.
- 3 thousands of Roman cities, while seldom disappearing completely, to shrink physically, much like the gold towns of Australia; for example, the conqueror *Alaric the Goth* defended Nimes from within the walls of its Roman arena; Arles experienced a similar reduction in its urban area, leading eventually to the establishment of a complete small medieval town within the circumferential walls of the Roman arena<sup>1</sup> The strongest areas of urbanization left by the Romans were in Italy and along the shores of the Mediterranean while the proliferation of cities diminished going northward into areas inhabited by Germanic Tribes.
- 4 establishment of a new pattern of life in the former Roman provinces (i.e. most of Europe). Centre of gravity moves northward to Frankish and Carolingian Empires.

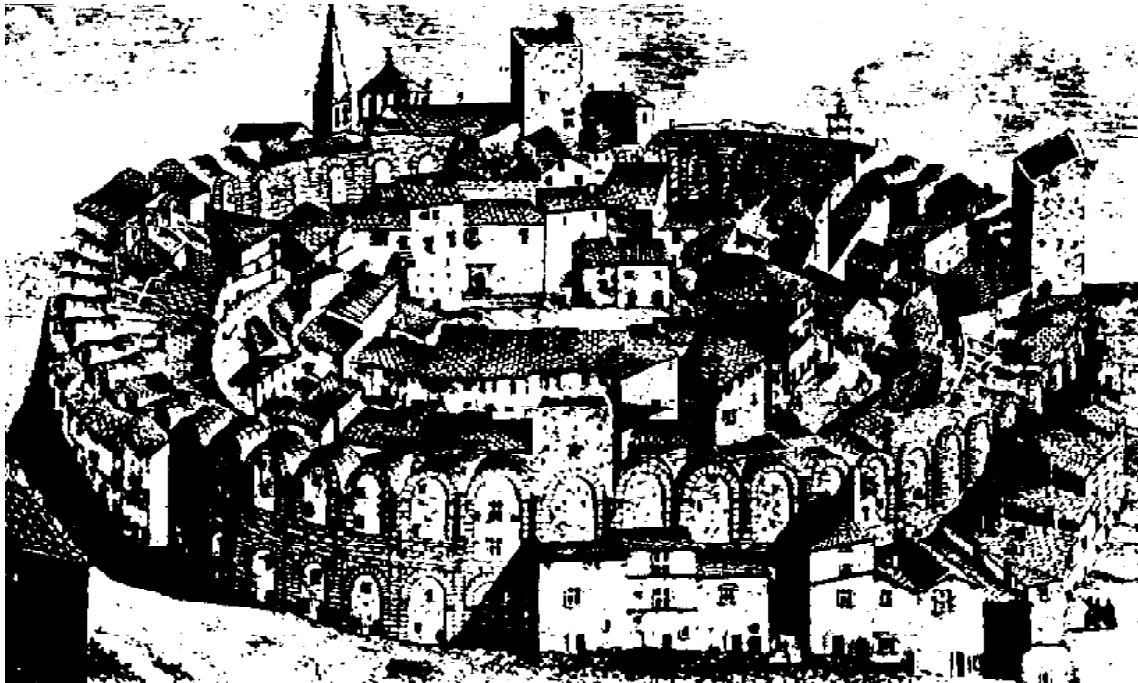
Barbarians despised city life and permanent settlements of civilized nations: cities, walls and human-made environment appeared unnatural to the *Franks, Saxons, Jutes, Vandals, Ostrogoths, Visigoths, etc.*

Accordingly, the new lords of Europe, after 450 A.D., were bound to the soil, to nature, and led a rural existence. They were hunters, animal breeders and warrior peasants of youthful, unbridled vigour and strength, seizing land where possible, as their ancestors had done 1,000 years before them.

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<sup>1</sup> historical fact well authenticated since it was not cleared away until the beginning of the 19th century.

2 Medieval Cities



The amphitheatre at Arles serving as fortification for urban housing since early medieval period  
View of 1686

***of primary considerations were:***

- 1 self protection;
- 2 tilling of enough soil to support human life at a low level (meanwhile, forces of nature re-afforested the once cultivated areas of Europe).

Germanic settlements were formed by solitary farmsteads (belonging to a family or clan) independently situated in cultivating or grazing land, and located in proximity to places of refuge. Early in their history, groups of farmsteads would unify into hamlets, leading to the formation of village cultures and group settlements (known as '*Streusiedlung*' or '*Sporadic*' settlement patterns).

All Roman concepts of urban life were wiped out for the time being or suspended; the ideas of law and order, and of civic institutions had become meaningless.

Nevertheless, the Roman heritage: its ideas of law, organization and administration of cities, city life, and its municipal organization was preserved. These Roman concepts provided the basis for the rebirth and revival of cities and city life in the 10<sup>th</sup> century when Mediterranean trade routes re-opened.

## CONFRONTATION: URBAN v. RURAL IDEAL

Two different worlds stand opposed to each other during the Dark Ages:

- 1 the world of **Nature**, of open countryside and rural settlements  
*and*
- 2 the world of the **Urban Culture of Rome**, of classical antiquity

1. *The World of Nature*, is that known to the Germanic tribes, who did not possess a word for city in their vocabulary but called it bourgh (fortress) (originally indo-european concept, also found in India)
2. *The World of the urban culture of Rome*; while Roman cities were largely destroyed in the physical sense, the spiritual legacy of the urban example of Rome remained in the minds and souls of Europeans. Roman urban concepts continued to live in the languages of Italy, France and Western Germany.

The first centuries of the middle ages in Europe were characterized by the confrontation and mutual intertwining of these two worlds. This process occurred in various forms, depending on location and the period of time. At the end of this clash - there emerges all over Europe a medieval town pattern in which the urban soul of mediterranean civilizations is finally triumphant over the Germanic ideal, yet, the mature medieval city is the child born out of the union of both these worlds (*note*: today's city continued yearning for nature and the wide open spaces.)

*The confrontation between urban and rural ideals is further intensified by:*

- 1 The new powers which crystallize within the **secular** and **ecclesiastical** worlds.

People were subject to 2 forms of government in Western Europe, each of which had its symbolic head:

### **Secular Power** (*worldly or temporal*)

The head of the secular power was the Holy Roman Emperor although in practice his jurisdiction was never as wide-spread or uniform as that of the Pope. The Kings held temporal power, in effect. Each King held sway over the Barons and through them over the people as a whole.

The basis of this system of secular authority was *land-holding*. All the land was supposed to belong to the King, who parcelled it out on terms of duty and loyalty to his supporters, who in turn parcelled it out on similar terms to lesser men. This is known as a feudal system, which is intensely conservative and based on a subsistence economy i.e. it produced just enough for immediate and local consumption (like the agrarian societies of the East in our times).

*Note*: the transition from a peasant society of free men with their elected leader to the feudal system took place between 350 A.D. and 650 A. D. (in places 800 A.D.)

The Secular Power was characterized by **Rural** tendencies:

Emperors, Kings, Princes and Barons did not, as a rule, think of making their permanent residences in cities (France is an exception) instead, they established themselves in:

*Castles and Fortresses*  
*Palatinates<sup>2</sup>*  
*Royal Palaces and the courts*

and these settlement 'cells' (typical of the Germanic spirit prevailing at the time) grew with time and developed into new cities.

Between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, the seat of government and power was constantly shifting. Kings, their courts and their supporters were always 'en route' travelling around their kingdom, seeking homage of their subjects, as well as gifts, taxes, and bribes. They would follow fixed itineraries and visit certain localities, where residence would be taken up for a period. This custom, naturally, favoured the development of residence cities (residences of royal power in absentia). Permanent seats of government (capital cities) as such only began to develop during the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Ecclesiastical Power** (*the Christian Church*)

A hierarchical system at the head of which was the Pope who created all the archbishops and bishops and retained their allegiance (and through them that of the lesser clergy) cf. 325 *Council of Nicea* (Turkey).

The church exhibited strong **Urban** tendencies:

The church was well formed at beginning of the Middle Ages. Bishops became untiring defenders of the urban concept: they either took up their bishopric in remains of earlier cities or founded new ones around their churches and cathedrals.

From the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the Christian church became the strongest civilising force in Europe, whose growing network of monasteries constituted the only international organisation. Within monastery walls lay the treasures and the records of the earlier civilisation; monks were the practical pioneers in the early Medieval period, playing a major part in the then acute problems of land clearing, draining fens, cutting down forests and building of bridges.

Its growth cells were:

*Churches*  
*Cloisters*  
*Monasteries*  
*Convents*

Some of these grew on old Roman town centres, while others grew near them or completely outside in the rural landscape.

## **2 . The General state of Insecurity and Uncertainty**

Europe and its population were fragmented. The section of the population who was not engaged in warfare was forced to seek protection i.e. craftsmen, artisans, merchants; accordingly, they preferred to settle near centres of spiritual or worldly power and pay for their protection with taxes, military service or their freedom.

## **3 . Growing need and desire for goods and services**

Permanent commercial centres establish where one might expect a large buying and selling hinterland e.g. Venice led the trade revival in 10<sup>th</sup> century and spread it to other cities, reanimating and transforming them.

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<sup>2</sup> A territory under the authority of a feudal lord; elsewhere, this authority belong

## ORIGINS of MEDIEVAL CITIES

The Medieval city developed out of a variety of nuclei. It is possible to distinguish the following important original growth points or take-off points on which the development of the medieval city is based:

### 1. **Cathedral, Church, Cloister, Monastery** *i.e. the Bishop's seat*

Urban research considers the residences of the early medieval bishops (often fortresses, courts and associated institutions for worship) as the principal link between Roman and Medieval Cities.

This is because the old Roman centres had remained spiritual focal points; at the onset of Middle Ages, bishops weave the old fabric of Roman towns into their Cathedral precincts (10<sup>th</sup> century):

- cathedral or church precinct, or monastery would attract 'christian' settlers
- in time, suburb or town would grow around such spiritual centres: starting a natural growth process, usually at the gateways/entrances of the precinct then fanning out along roadways.
- such growth logically assumed a radio-concentric pattern.

### 2. **Fortresses (Royal castles, palaces; princely courts)**

- the worldly powers provided the other major growth point for the emerging medieval city
- a similar growth process to the bishops seat, particular as the kings and princes, in their religious zeal, surrounded their residences with collegiate churches and monasteries
- a radio-concentric growth pattern centred on fortresses or castle nucleus. Offered protection to peasant population in the 'Umland':

*Early Medieval Period:*

Castle is stronghold, fortress a dominant symbol for the people but an object in the landscape  
- dominant, aloof

*Later Medieval Period:*

Castle becomes part of town which which by now has filled with merchants, tradesmen, craftsmen  
- still dominant, but less so and integrated into urban landscape

### 3. **Palatinate (Pfalz)**

- name given to a territory ruled by a Count Palatine  
i.e. a nobleman, who for some deed or service rendered, is granted jurisdiction over his territory such as elsewhere belongs to the royal sovereign alone.
- palatinates, many of which evolved in Germany, attracted many merchants, artisans, and servants who wished to serve, support or work under apalatine master where they could enjoy relative freedom and fewer tiers of authority.

### 4. **The Market Place/Staging Points**

- wherever a trade route crossed such a spiritual or worldly landscape, market settlements, warehouses and business centres would form.
- crossing points of two or more trade routes would also often result in birth and development of a settlement.
- growth point of settlements of free merchants and artisans, who were free agents dependent only on King and Church.
- 
- the **market-place** is, in the final analysis, most important in urban development; it ultimately proved victorious over the castle, the palatinate, and the cathedral.
- many scholars support the '*market theory*'; whatever the other contributions, cities owe their existence, in the main, to that fundamental growth cell in their fabric : the market-place.

#### **5. The Free Settlements (i.e. independent)**

- granted special rights (e.g. to market, to law courts) privileges established spontaneously for a particular reason.

#### **6. The Historic Towns (usually old Roman ones)**

- resurrected through the growth of its remaining inhabitants and immigrants
- old Roman towns were changing and reviving their great public buildings: amphitheatres, baths, law courts presented ideal containers of high-density housing.
- often identical to 1 and 2

### *Conclusion*

The true medieval city rose out of the types of settlement nuclei described above- its development may be attributed to any one or a combination of these nuclei of urban crystallization.

**The true medieval city had emerged once it could be differentiated from the surrounding countryside by the presence of people engaging in commerce under laws and institutions of their own (from early 11<sup>th</sup> century on when conditions were more stable and commerce increased).**

## MEDIEVAL TOWN FOUNDATIONS

The Medieval Age was the greatest town founding period in history. It began with Charlemagne who laid foundations of many new towns (800-814 AD). It was also a period in history when ordinary people began to take an acknowledged place in society. Birth, wealth, and power began to give way to personal merit.

This new attitude was reflected in the form that towns took. They evolved to meet human needs and their pattern changed to match increased social responsibility. Medieval cities become both protectors and symbols of civic rights and liberties. This birth of the Commune as a legal entity has been called by *Prof. Paul Hofer* 'a thrilling process in legal history'.

The process of medieval urbanization proceeded from West --> East and from South --> North. The great urban colonization of much of Europe was characterized by Bastides, planned, geometric new towns. It was a period of great colonization in which the urban ideal was firmly implanted on a largely rural continent. Medieval colonization has been compared by some with that of classical Greece.

Not only new towns but existing villages and hamlets are extended, spontaneously or by design, and cities grow and flourish widely.

### 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> Centuries i.e. up to 11<sup>th</sup> century

- accelerated urban growth begins and developments can be distinguished around that time within the chaos of Dark Ages.
- coronation of Charles the Great in 800, who founded many towns
- population growth accelerates and living standards rise
- trade revives
- Charlemagne introduced gold currency to replace silver as less volatile (?)
- adoption of advanced techniques of bookkeeping based on arabic numerals
- Christianity virtues combine with ideals of chivalry and knighthood and convert the last of the heathens of the European frontier.
- new and completely transformed towns and cities begin to emerge in Western Europe. These grow out of a variety of urban nuclei, which over time, develop into a new urban fabric: *the medieval city*.
- few settlements could be strictly called cities, at least in central Europe e.g. of the 140 towns in Germany few had more than **500 inhabitants**.

### 12<sup>th</sup> century on i.e. from 1100 onwards

- cities grew more rapidly in size and numbers
- the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries (1000 – 1200 AD.) saw the transition from an open plan to a structurally definable and more closed and compact form.

The loose arrangement or network of rulers, clergy, handicraft, and trade solidified 'like islands in a silted lake' according to Prof. Paul Hofer.

### 13<sup>th</sup> century i.e. 1200 – 1300

- by the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, the number of German cities had risen to 2000.
- the century produced the most active colonization and town foundation- it was a veritable new town boom



**Why 12<sup>th</sup> century town foundations did better than 13<sup>th</sup> century ones**

12<sup>th</sup> century foundations, the first foundations in large numbers, were generally more successful than their 13<sup>th</sup> century successors because in the 12<sup>th</sup> century:

- 1 Europe sparsely urbanized landscaped
- 1 many advantageous locations with suitable hinterland

while in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, urban regions were more saturated with development by this time. New foundations found strong competition from earlier ones.

This meant that 13<sup>th</sup> century towns needed a larger critical urban mass<sup>3</sup> and more effective privileges in order to succeed.

in the 12<sup>th</sup> century a few hundred people sufficed to create a balanced community

in the 13<sup>th</sup> century several thousand, probably, were needed.

**SIZE**

In terms of size, the medieval city was designed and organized for a limited population and built on a *pedestrian scale* (cf. Classical Greece):

Area of Medieval City

|                        |          |                  |               |
|------------------------|----------|------------------|---------------|
| Medium-sized towns     | not over | <b>50 ha</b>     | [124 acres]   |
| Many small sized towns |          | <b>4 – 10 ha</b> | [10-25 acres] |

Population

|                     |      |   |
|---------------------|------|---|
| e.g. Köln (Cologne) | 1248 | <b>25,000</b> population (largest city in German realm, yet small by today's sizes) |
|                     | 1500 | <b>35,000</b> population  |

Overcrowding

Increases in trade and wealth were paralleled by increased population and by the end of the medieval period overcrowding of buildings within the city walls led to a diminished open space and consequent deterioration of the primitive form of sanitation.

It must be remembered that the congestion associated with medieval towns is due in the main to overcrowding in later Medieval or Renaissance times. There are examples of comparatively unspoilt medieval towns, e.g. Fournes in Flanders, which demonstrate that although houses joined one another and were immediately aligned to the street, there often was plenty of garden space provided at the rear.

<sup>3</sup> 'Critical Urban Mass' - i.e. the minimum number of people, production units, institutions needed in sufficient density and concentration, and degree of interaction needed to make a town thrive:

## LOCATION

"For obvious historical reasons, the most characteristic developments took place in Germany. The thinly populated country with much fewer remainders of Roman town planning than Italy and France brought forth a much wider variety of urban forms. Thus, German examples of medieval towns will outnumber by far those from other European countries, exactly as Italy comes to the fore in the Renaissance and France during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries."

- Professor T.F.

### **Types of Locations**

Medieval cities did establish in many and varied locations:

*in plains, on hillsides, on hilltops, on island, in valleys, on river crossings.*

Site selection would depend on a combination of traditional needs such as protection, commercial advantage, suitable communications or fertile hinterland. City layouts, therefore, follow different planning styles depending on location and topography e.g. the hill towns of southern France, southern Germany, and of central Italy.

### **Orientation**

Medieval Cities of Europe were orientated in relation to their topography.

Intentional orientation is not noticeable; layouts of towns and cities do not observe the four cardinal points as in Antiquity.

### **Shape**

The shape or outline of town plans was delineated by the wall which would best protect the city.

A wall had to have the shortest circumference possible and take advantage of topographical features. Obviously, this often limited the use of geometric shapes; yet simple, geometric plans were adopted whenever possible, especially in flat country.

However, the layout of medieval cities was not based on any symbolic geometric figure. The choice of form or outline of a town was left to the engineer responsible for its fortifications (as in Classical Greece).

## CLASSIFICATION

Medieval towns can be classified according to **function** e.g.:

|                              |   |                                       |
|------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| <u>Farm Towns</u>            | - | especially in Scandinavia and Britain |
| <u>Fortress Towns</u>        | - | Toledo, Edinburgh, Tours, Warwick     |
| <u>Church Towns</u>          | - | York, Chartres                        |
| <u>Merchant Prince Towns</u> | - | Florence, Siena                       |
| <u>Merchant Guild Towns</u>  | - | Hanseatic League towns                |

### **or plan type**

Among the many possible classifications it seems convenient to divide Medieval town plans into those which are spontaneous and those which are planned.

## 1. Spontaneous or Organic Towns

These grew for the most part from the huddle of peasants in need of protection about a nucleus such as the stronghold of a local wealthy leader or perhaps a monastery, which might be equally fortified. In later times, and in settled areas, spontaneous development also took place at junctions of trade routes where exchange of goods induced development of a market. The resultant bargain of protection in exchange for work was the essence of the feudal system.

The majority of towns of medieval origin in Western Europe fall into this group.

The street pattern of the spontaneous town was not conditioned by traffic problems; streets were narrow, winding and steep according to the physical demands of the site.

(Types **A** to **F** fall within this group)

## 2. Planned or Geometric Towns

Building of new towns to accommodate growing population numbers and economic expansion became soon became a major task because of:

- a) natural limitations of local food supply for older towns,
- b) the needs of a constant extension of conquered territory eastward across Europe.

The chain of new cities which includes most of Europe's Eastern capitals shows orderly, grid-iron layouts such as Breslau, Vilna, Cracow.

(The **Bastide Towns** and Type **G** fall within this group).

## MEDIEVAL TOWN PLANS

These occurred in an inexhaustible variety of forms, shapes reflecting different planning ideas and needs. The plans depended on location, time, method and purpose of the city's foundation, and the existence of any previous settlements.

In general, it is possible to classify medieval plan types, according to their historic origin [**1 F**], their geographic peculiarities [**1C, D & E**], and their mode of development [**1 A & B and 2**].

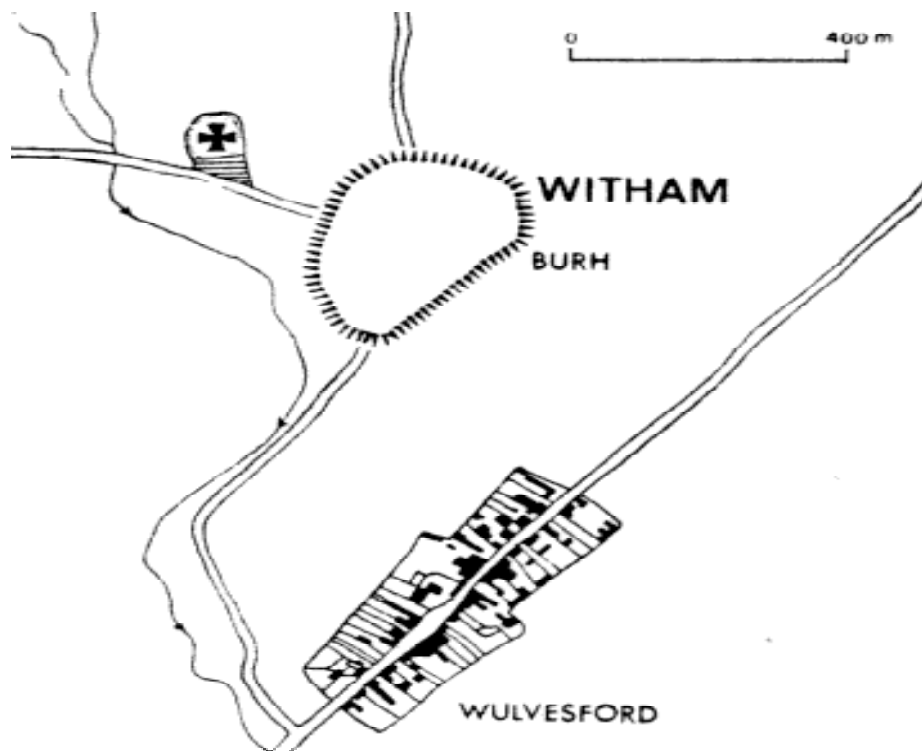
All three can be found in a variety of forms, either separate or in combination, all over Europe.

### *Principal Types of Plans*

#### 1. SPONTANEOUS/ORGANIC TOWNS [A to F]

Towns which grew by slow stages out of a village or group of villages under the protection of a monastery, a church, or a castle - these would conform to topographical and geographical peculiarities, and change from generation to generation.

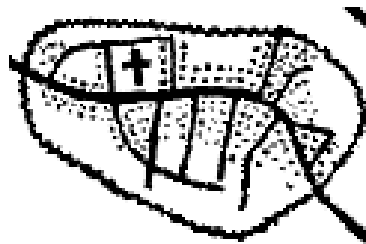
## A LINEAR PLANS



Two medieval villages in Essex, England:  
 Witham, Anglo-Saxon 'burh', and late medieval 'town' of Wulvesford, built along a Roman road

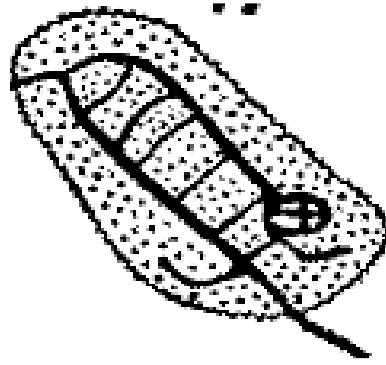
### Structure

- can be regarded as the archetype of the industrial settlement with a *long, narrow street* flanked by houses of tradespeople cf. oriental Bazaar



Simplest form of axial or linear plan with side streets forming a *Reihenzeln* near Kaisersberg, Germany

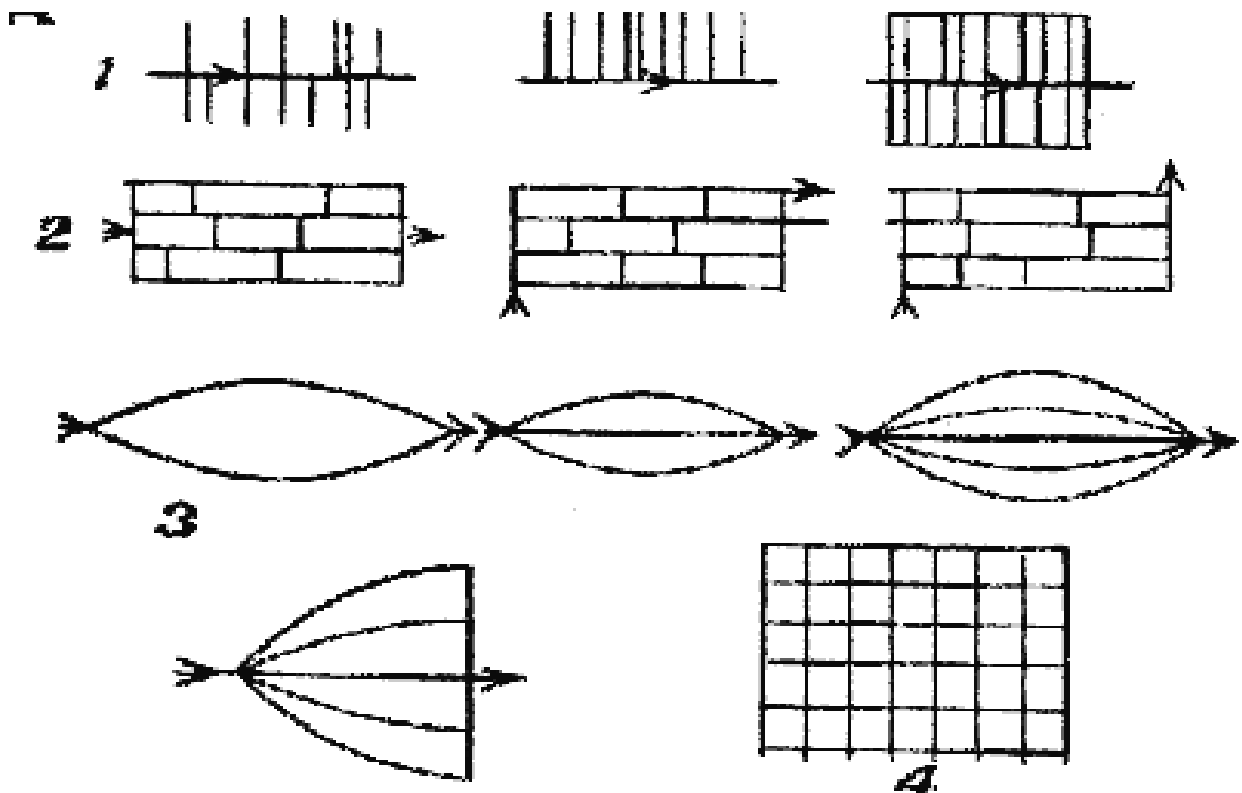
- linear plans have one or more axes (hence axial plans) with longitudinal main streets, lined with (almost) continuous buildings running through the settlement.



A controlled linear plan layout with two principal axes  
Mühlendorf on the Inn

**Form of Growth**

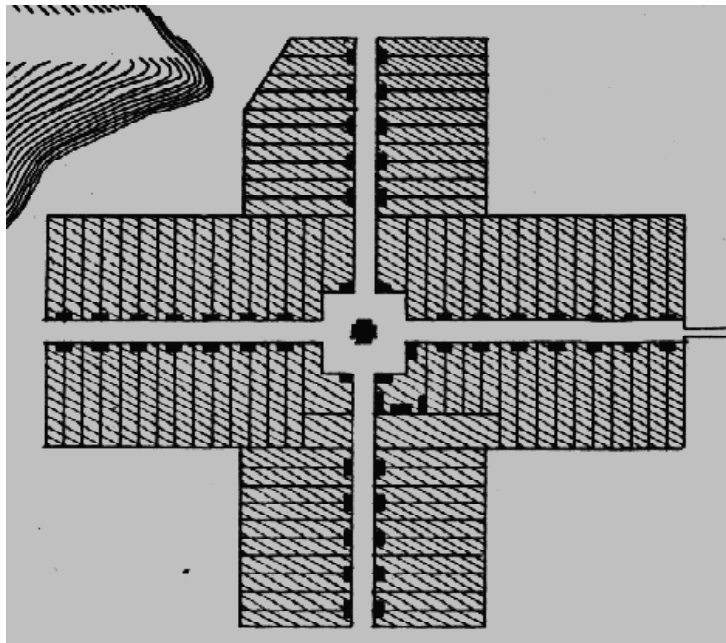
- the principal axis invariably ensured the formation of a *street market* settlement. Note that this preceded the later, centralized market square.  
e.g. in south-west Germany 12<sup>th</sup> most towns were based on street market plans; in the 13<sup>th</sup> century market squares become more common.



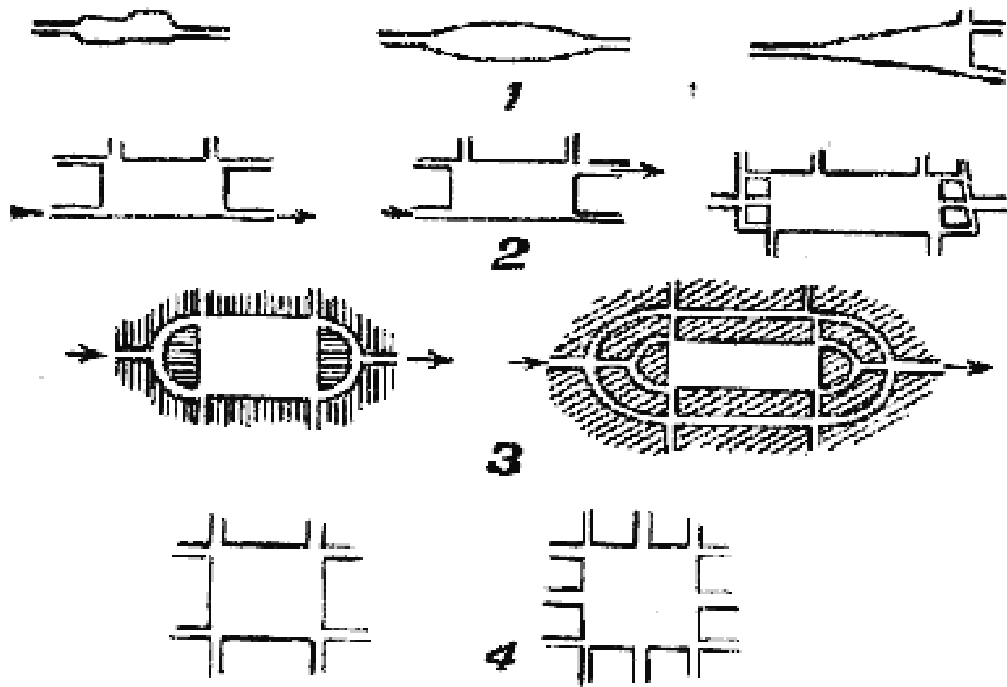
Medieval urban street patterns developed on a route axis.  
1 Rib pattern 2 Parallel street pattern 3 Spindle or elliptical  
4 Grid patterns  
[from Dickinson]

**Normal mode of Growth: (expansion)**

1. initial development of one linear street with market function - the main street
2. a secondary axis is formed parallel to the main street i.e. repetition of the archetype; this was usual when new groups of settlers were strangers to each other: as a new group of merchants settled, it would form another market street, parallel to the original one, repeating the arrangement anew.
3. interconnecting streets, often based on existing tracks running off the principal axis, would be developed and also flanked by housing. Later, this led to development of *central markets*.
4. note variety of forms of development:
  - 1 2 or more **street market systems** could intersect at right angles forming a cross and, ultimately, nearby a market place
  - 1 regular spaced pattern of interconnecting streets would form rib or fishbone patterns.



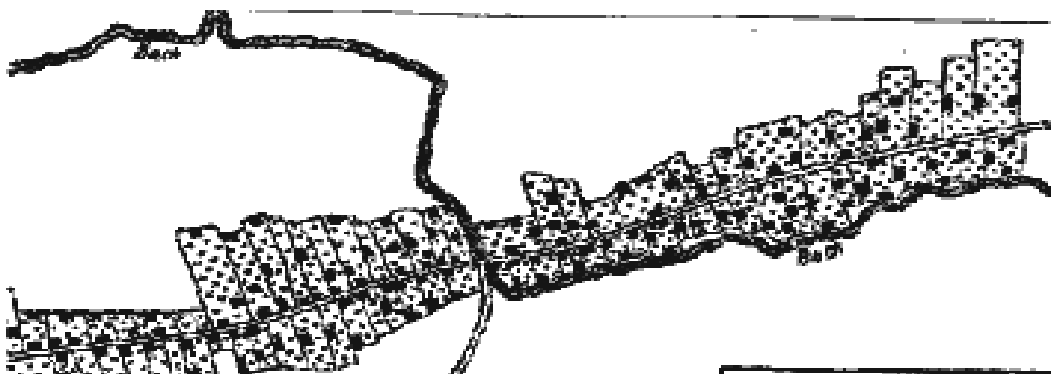
Gosen, Brandenburg, Germany  
Two intersecting linear routes forming cross pattern

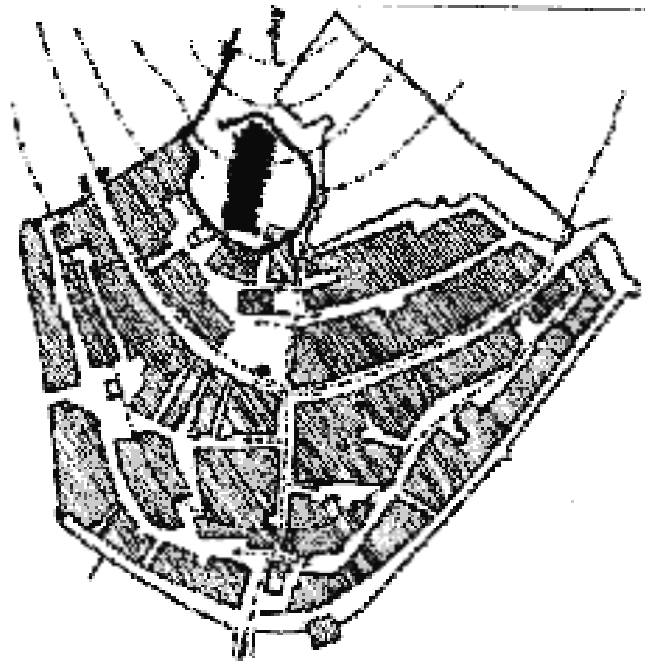


Development of the market place in relation to the route axis  
 1 Street Markets 2 Rectangular or Long markets between two parallel  
 3 Rectangular or long markets in a spindle pattern 4 Square market place  
 [from Dickinson]

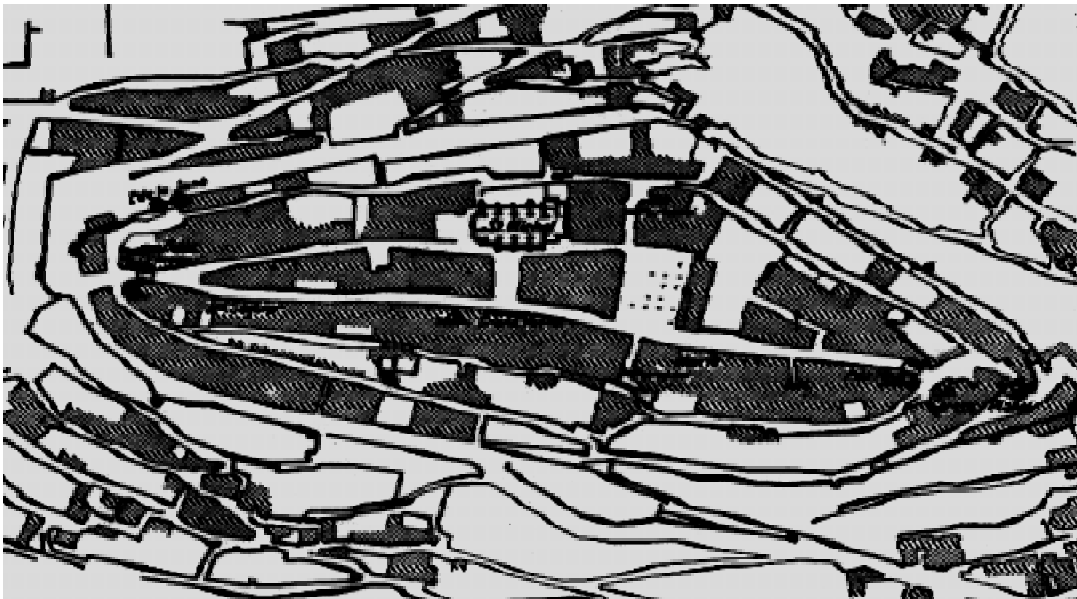
**Location**

Linear Plan type is found predominantly in flat country as the village of Giesen, Pomerania, below; although distorted linear layouts, following contours, can be found on hilltops or hillsides.





Herrenberg, Baden-Württemberg, Germany  
A linear plan distorted by contour lines



Cordes, France  
linear plan developed along ridge of a hill  
street layout reflects contour lines



## B. Radial or Radio-Concentric Plans

grew gradually, house by house, around a central nucleus such as a church, monastery/abbey, or castle. Urban expansion takes place by series of consecutive rings of residential development (usually quite irregular rings) around the original growth point.

shapes of these towns range from irregular forms to oval, circular, rectangular, or even starshaped outlines.

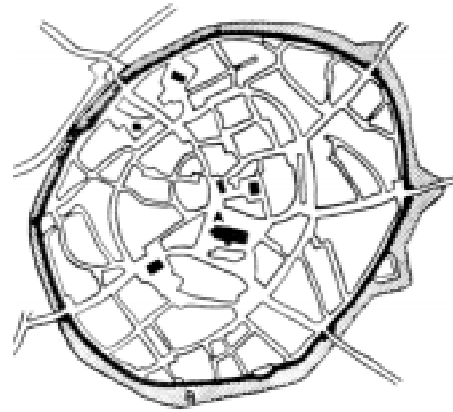


St. Quentin showing first nucleus of settlement grouped around the cath. with market place outside it.

[from Dickinson]

### Nördlingen

- is a most typical form of radial plan with a regular oval to circular shape or outline.
- originally a Roman settlement but town structure evolved in medieval times around a central growth point: a Royal Frankish Court.
- town gradually formed successive rings of buildings (rather protective of its precious centre) around nucleus.



Plan of Nördlingen, Germany  
 A - Cathedral      B - Moat



The growth of Aachen  
 1 -Nucleus of Carolingian palace , church and baths, around which clustered settlement  
 2 - Areas walled by Frederick Barbarossa  
 3 -Areas walled in the 14<sup>th</sup> century

*i. Towns with oval, rectangular, or circular outline*

|           |                                 |
|-----------|---------------------------------|
| Germany:  | Nördlingen, Wemding, Rothenburg |
| France:   | Perouges                        |
| Flanders: | Bergues                         |
| Holland:  | Amersfoort                      |

*ii. Towns with Star-shaped outline*

Geneva, Lausanne, Zürich, Dublin have starshaped outlines as cities developed in some directions only because of physical limitations of site.

**C. NETWORK PLANS**

Martina Franca ( 1300 A.D . Italy)

**D. TRIANGULAR PLANS**

Bazas (France), known in Roman times as Vasates.

**E. COMBINATION OF TYPES A B and C**

**F. 'NATURAL' or HISTORIC PLANS**

'Natural' or historic plans are those spontaneous types which originated in antiquity, generally Roman cities, and which were revived in medieval times.

Their plans were the result of natural development of events (historical accident rather than conscious choice) which acted freely on urban fabric and caused haphazard growth and extensions.

These usually retained their rectilinear street systems (at least in the core area) and now included a citadel or monastery.

The tendency to follow the original concept (castrum) varied from example to example and often met with little success.

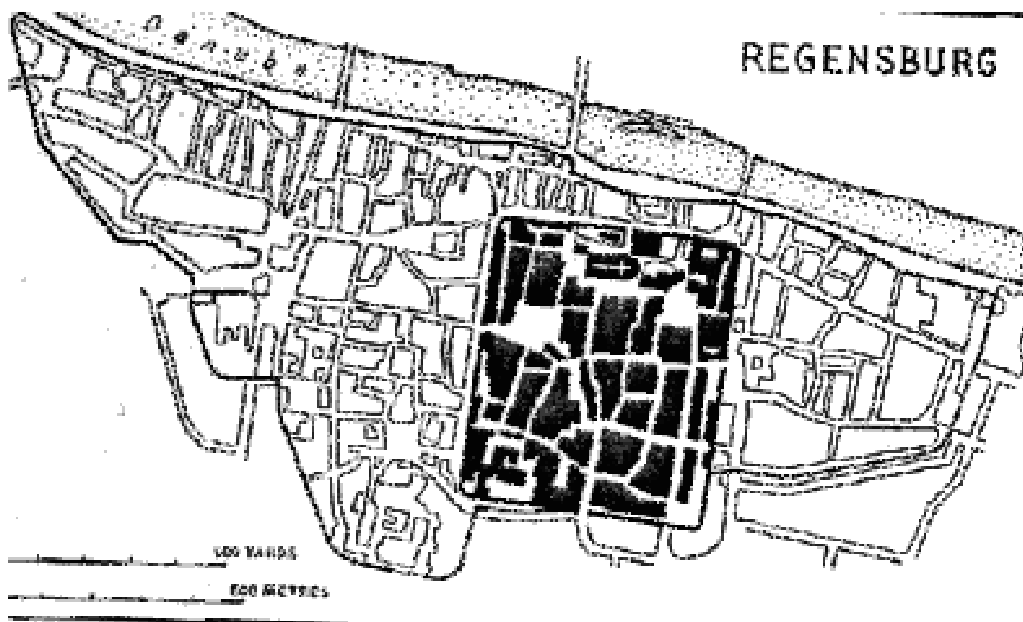
Examples:

Paris, Rome, Florence, Verona, Bologna  
Carcassone (Cite),



- A Market Square
- B Castle
- C Church of St. Nazaire

Plan of old Carcassonne, France  
 its Roman origin is only vaguely recognizable; more usually, the 'natural'  
 or historic type tends to have an ancient i.e. Roman nucleus  
 and a radio-concentric development around it.



Regensburg, Bavaria, Germany  
 Note Roman castrum shown in black, contained cathedral and palaces of bishop a.  
 Mercantile settlement lies to the west, became part of town and walled in  
 [after Gradmann]

## 2. PLANNED, GEOMETRIC TOWNS (the Bastide Towns and type G)

This category comprises the numerous planned new foundations of the high middle ages: i.e. the colonial towns, laid out on the grid-iron plan and commonly referred to as Bastides. These represent a significant aspect of medieval city development.

### BASTIDES

'*Bastide*' is a French term and means literally '*small fortress*'. Originally it referred to the planned new towns which were built in southwest France during the early part of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (50 of them by Edward I, prior to that by St. Louis, King of France.) especially in the Languedoc region.

Later, the term was also applied to the castle towns in North Wales built by Edward I and now is accepted as the general term for all planned, colonial towns (new towns) of the medieval period including French, English, Welsh and German examples.

#### **Functions**

- to populate and open-up new frontiers
- to resettle population displaced by wars
- to control conquered regions
- to control and weaken a nearby older town by diverting commerce from it to the new Bastide (e.g. Carcassonne)

#### **Planning Principles**

1. Bastides are new foundations and have pre-determined plan forms
2. The Grid-iron system and rectilinear plot sub-division form the basis of their layout
3. The main inducement to settle in Bastides provided by house plot and some farming grants together with other economic privileges

#### **note:**

- (a) not all Bastides built on new sites; many based on existing village settlements yet redeveloped along planned lines.
- (b) not all are of a standard grid-iron plan. Grids often considerably distorted or used for parts only.
- (c) street layout was not necessarily coupled with a rectangular outline for the city as a whole; sometimes the *insulae* are placed within circular or oval circumference walls.
- (d) although bastides in various parts of Europe have much in common, there are significant differences in form and function which establish distinct national characteristics.

#### **Examples:**

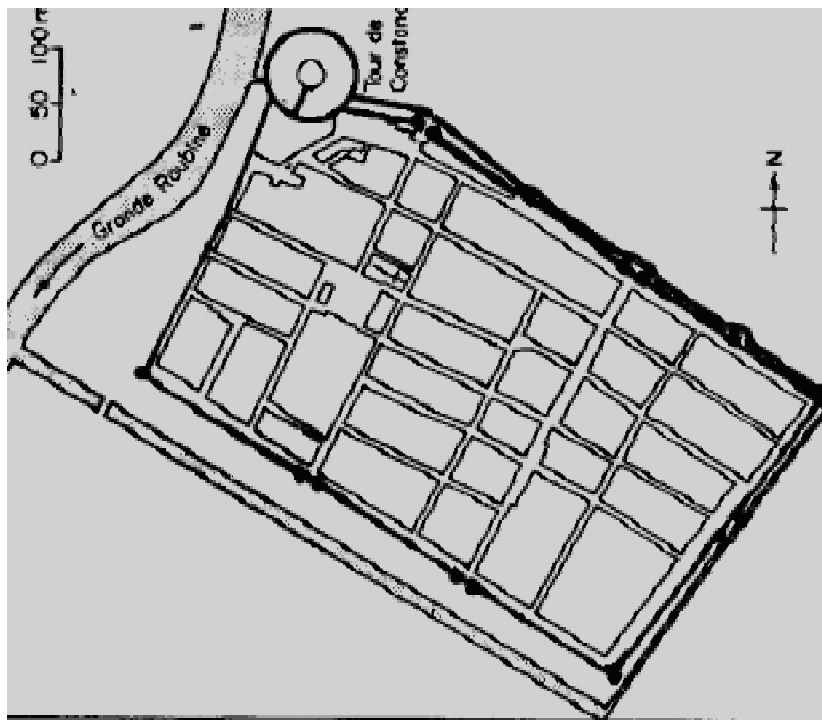
Edward I of England - Duke of Aquitaine (the old Roman province of West France) built hundreds of bastides, especially along the Garonne Valley. Few survive, but English names in France generally indicate Edward's bastides e.g. Libourne in 1270.

Probably only one in ten was successful.

## France

### Aigues-Mortes 1240

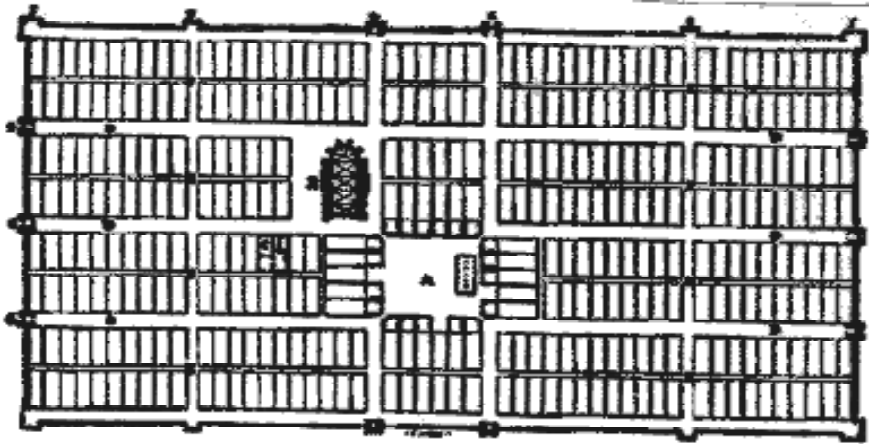
- founded by St. Louis (Louis IX) as base for his crusade to the holy land (seventh Crusade) It remains a perfect example of a St. Louis IX bastide.
- for about 15,000 inhabitants
- built on flat meadow land west of Rhone delta and, at the time, only French port on Mediterranean coast; it outlived its purpose and did not expand.
- grid-iron plan measures about *650 x 300 yards* and is somewhat distorted. Nevertheless, it represents a carefully delineated and planned grid:
  - 1 central street runs the length of the plan, past market
  - further streets on either side
  - 5 streets at right angles.
- massive fortifications: 35' high with 15 towers built by son of the founder, Phillipe le Hardi in 1272 with help of Simone Boccanegra of Italy.
- a citadel or fortress is located in the north-west corner of the plan: it is guarded by the tour de Constance immediately beyond the city wall.
- by the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century the channel linking town to the sea silted up. It is since separated by about 3 miles of salt marsh from the sea.
- Its role as a port disappeared.



Plan of Aigues-Mortes, France

### Monpazier in Guyenne \_ 1284

- founded by Edward I, as one of several towns which he established to protect his territory in Gascony and consolidate his authority over it.
- 
- a most perfect checkerboard layout 400 x 200 m based on a standard module: house plots frontage 24', depth 72'.
- 
- streets 20' wide, lanes at rear of house plots 6'.



Plan of Monpazier

- 3 streets run length of plan, 4 run width, forming total of 20 building blocks, one of which was reserved for the market, 1/2 of another for the church and a small space associated with it.
- market square is arcaded, the streets running underneath the projecting first floors of the houses enclosing square.
- layout was never as regimented as suggested in plan. Like many bastides, not all sites were developed completely or at all. Present day plan shows marked departure from this stylized ideal plan.

Other French Bastide plans: Sauveterre-de-Guyenne, Cadillac near Bordeaux

Montreal, Vianne, Carcassonne ville-basse, Beaumont-en-Perigord (below)



Beaumont-en-Perigord

## ***Bastides of England and Wales***

English 'bastides' were replacement towns for settlements fallen into disuse or ruins for some reason or another.

Most medieval towns in England grew horizontally since fortifications were not required after Norman times. Bastides, however, were required in Wales by Edward I in order to control the local population.

These bastides were built on lines of French ones i.e. regular army garrisons with associated trading functions.

Edward's bastides in Wales were located in strategic positions. Welsh and Jewish citizens were not permitted to settle in them (whereas the French accepted any reputable person) while English settlers were attracted by large grants. The plans were always based on some kind of grid, however, outer boundaries often being irregular.

### Welsh examples:

- Flint
- Caernavon
- Conway



Plan of Caernavon, Wales  
[Bell]

### English examples were all replacement towns:

- 1287 Winchelsea
- 1293 Kingston-on-hull
- Salisbury ( Old Sarum)
- 1220 - a church foundation
- 1227 - granted royal charter



## ***South-west Germany / Switzerland***

### **THE ZÄHRINGER NEW TOWNS**

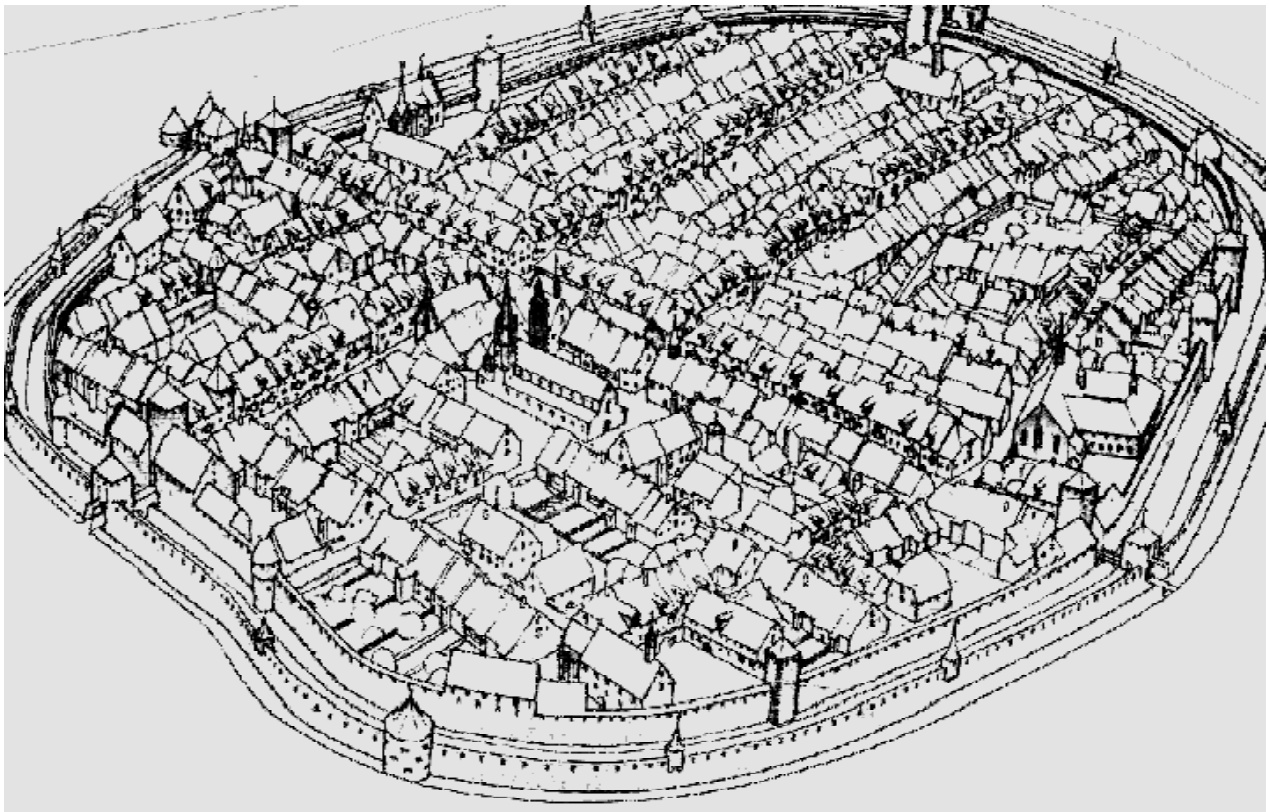
One group of planned new town, in particular, deserves special mention in relation to the urban colonizations of the Middle Ages: the huge promotion of the Zähringer New Towns, which included:

#### *In Switzerland:*

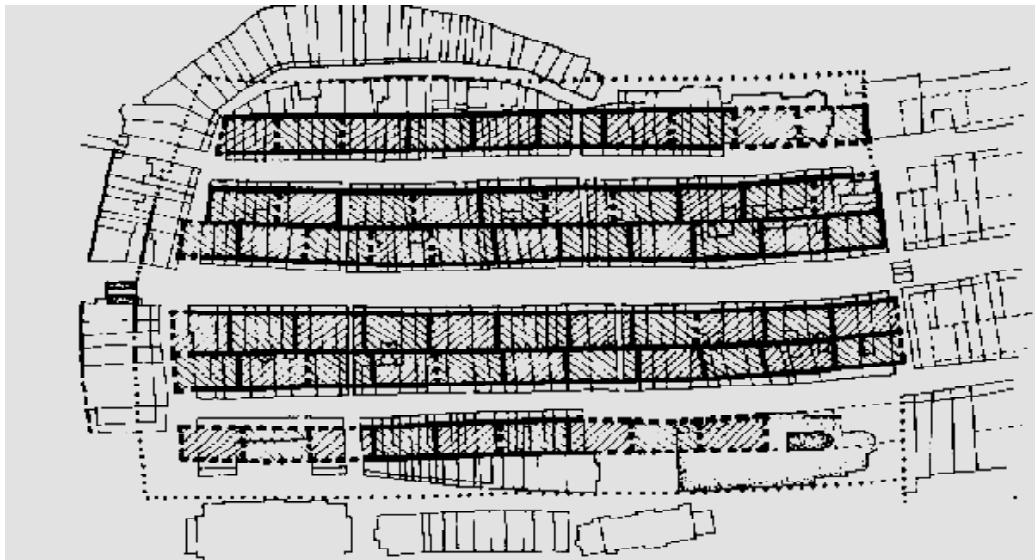
Bern  
Zürich  
Thun  
Murten  
Fribourg  
Burgdorf  
Rheinfelden

#### *In Germany:*

Freibourg  
Neuenburg  
Rottweil  
Villigen  
Offenburg



View of Villingen, a Zähringer New Town  
in the eastern Black Forest, Germany



Reconstruction of Bern's homestead plan (the first Zähringer e:  
 by Prof. Paul Hofer  
 64 homesteads of 60 x 100 feet

Bern was a capital, while the others were regional centres. The 12 Zähringer towns formed an economic regional system encouraging much interaction; the distances between them took this into account.

These New Towns were mostly founded in politically distinct territories without defined frontiers, at same time as bastides (SW of France).

They served the long-range political aspiration and economic desires of the Dukes of Zähringen who wanted to benefit from the developing money economy: they peddled land grants, market rights, and privileges in order to attract craftsmen and merchants (who, in turn, would create a source of income in customs and taxation) cf. present policies to attract industry by tax incentives

Most prospered and generally did better than French bastides i.e. none have disappeared while many French bastides have atrophied since the Middle Ages.

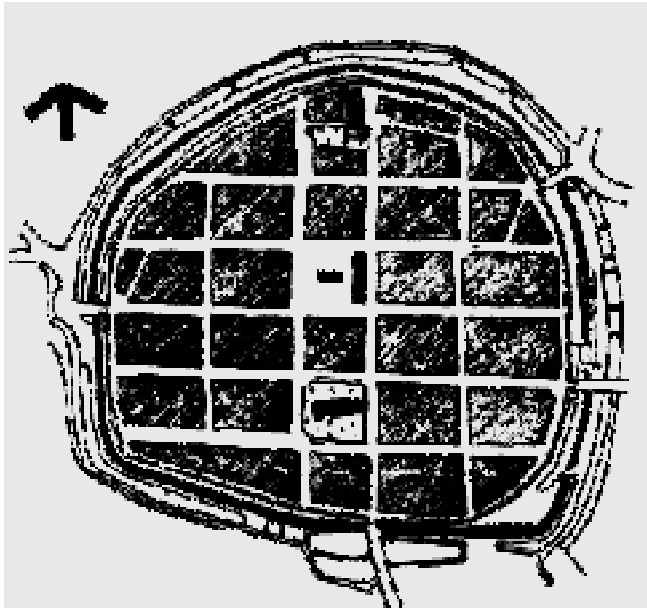
*Compare today's total populations in*

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Zähringer Towns | 595, 000 (with Zurich about 1 million) inhabitants |
| Bastides        | 90,000   |

**German colonial towns:**

Neubrandenburg in Prussia 1248

- founded to take overspill population of the original town; in addition, it was part of the strategy of German expansion.



Plan of Neubrandenburg, Prussia, Germany

## G. EXTRAORDINARY PLANS

Residence cities such as Vienna New Town

### *On the use of planned, geometric grids*

These became popular during the height of the period when the largely increased number of ordinary citizens and artisans had a say in civic affairs along side the merchants and their powerful guilds.

This kind of plan served the various needs of the time very well. It gave a planned order but also allowed all sorts of variations. For instance, main and side streets could be easily differentiated by giving them varying widths.

## **MEDIEVAL TOWNSCAPE**

### ***THE 3-dimensional STRUCTURE OF THE MEDIEVAL CITY***

Throughout the period, and particularly during the later medieval days, three elements dominated the city in varying degrees of balance and competed for supremacy, physically as well as spiritually.

We are immediately impressed by the **compactness** of the towns with their closeknit communities flourishing under the shadow of the church and the watchful eye of the feudal aristocracy.

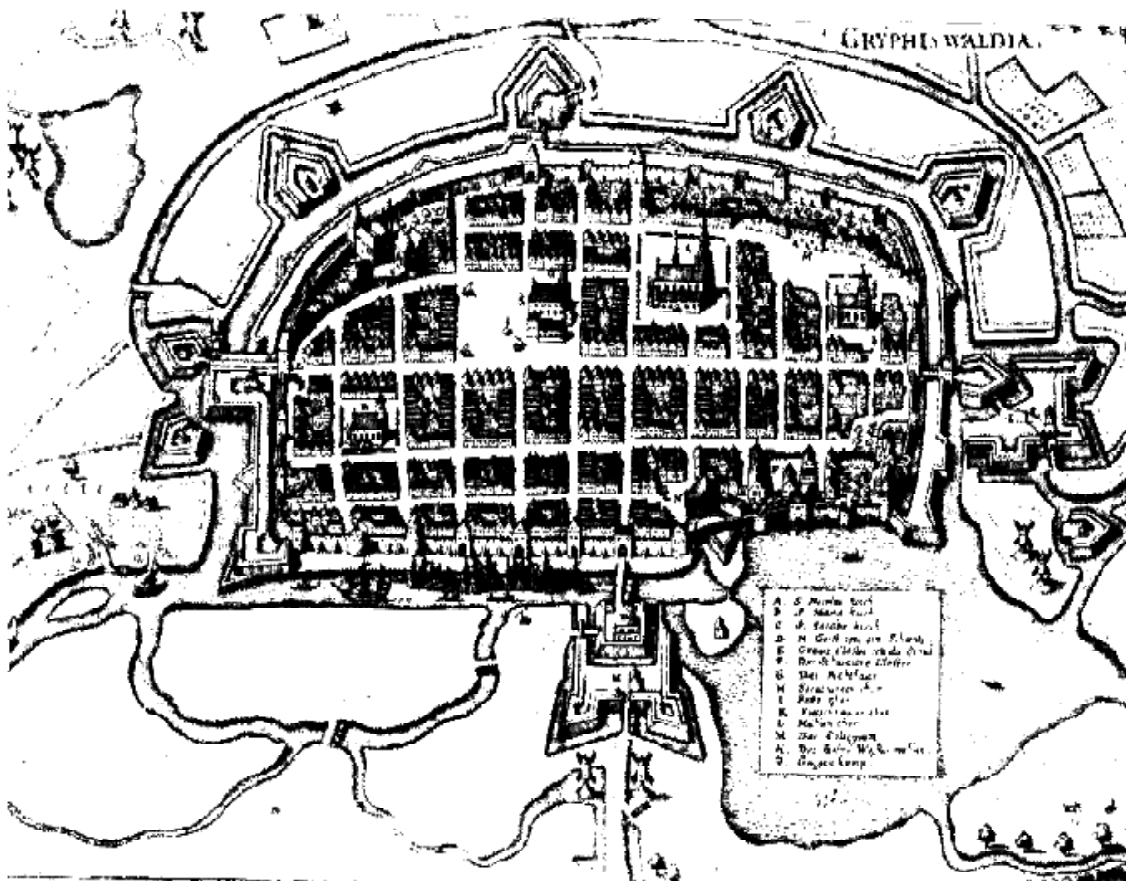
Architecturally, the medieval city is generally characterised by a strong **verticality**, expressive of the **religious** spirit of the time and symbolizing man's heavenly aspirations.

Throughout the period, and particularly the later medieval days, three elements dominated the city in varying balance and competed for supremacy physically as well as spiritually.

1. **Church element**
  - church, cathedral, cloisters, monastery.
2. **Secular element**
  - castle or fortress
  - especially dominant in England and Germany
3. **Civic element**
  - Walls and gates, town houses, town hall, guild hall, market place.

These three elements, in combination, form the total organisation of the medieval city and its community. The first two elements church and feudal castle dominated medieval townscape in its formative and adolescent stages; the mature stage, however, saw the growing strength and development of the merchant community whose activity is expressed in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, the civic element which by the high middle ages assumes supremacy.

*Medieval townscapes are at their best where they successfully integrate these 3 elements within their urban fabric.*



Greifswald, north-eastern Germany  
'bastide' or colonial town of c. 1250

### ***The Medieval city has much in common with Ancient Greece:***

- spatially and architecturally it is **expression of the urban community**
- it is **personal**, has **pedestrian scale** and is built for a limited population
- its minor spatial arrangements have great plasticity: instead of free-standing houses of the Greeks we now have compact building blocks, irregular roof lines but as in classical Greece the townscape is interspersed with buildings of special symbolic and practical significance which, in turn, create focal points.
- the close **integration with nature** reminds us of the Greek urban model. Although separated from nature by its fortifications, the medieval city is not alienated from it, having strong economic as well as emotional links with it. In purely physical terms also, medieval cities, are excellently integrated with the topography of their sites.

### ***The Elements of the Medieval city:***

#### **The Individual House**

House styles and their interior arrangements varied from region to region:

- town houses of lower nobility and feudal lords are quite different.
- houses often designed as fortresses and accommodate several generations of one individual family (in Italy often have towers in association).
- in some towns, street blocks are organized in defensive units with individual walls and defensive towers.

*The most common house type was:*

- predominantly one-family, several stories high; of human scale, arranged thus:
  - ground floor* - commerce, trade
  - upper floors* - family residence
  - under roof* - servants
- small, occupying narrow frontages along narrow streets (to allow as many as possible to be accessible from street, as craftsmen worked at home).
- extended long way back from street.
- 
- usually built with a backyard/garden and had privacy.
- held to the three basic Gothic colours of red/yellow/blue.
- frequently built of timber but use of stone becomes widespread after tragic experience of great fires in many cities.

Urban houses were derived from farm houses of the early medieval period.

Traditionally, the (integral) relationship between work and residence leads to strong population concentration and intensive land-use.

The Late Medieval period sees an increased differentiation of dwelling houses as an attempt to create more private and complex personal living space.

#### note on verticality of Architecture

Verticality is typical of middle ages and a function of intensive land-use which drives building construction upwards.

Architects made the best of small and irregular viewing spaces available to them; seldom could a building be viewed as an isolated entity (except front of churches and cathedrals).

Most often, only a partial view would be possible and in order to see the entire building one would have to look upwards: hence the strong vertical emphasis in building design and in structural systems.

Design of facades reveals particularly sensitive appreciation of how buildings were actually viewed and of their visual interdependence with adjoining buildings.

### **The Market Place**

- public, social life concentrated in city centres.
- represented political character of a city as well as citizens' self-identification.
- communal centres (i.e. belonging to community, expressive of it). Emerge only during high middle ages (10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> centuries). In earlier times the fortress, abbey, or Bishops' seat took up central positions.
- cover substantial area(s) of urban land; occur in multiple form depending on nature and magnitude of cities economy (wool, textile, pig, fish etc. markets).

### **Street Markets**

- earliest form and represent extension of the linear traffic artery on which many medieval plan types are based.

### **Central Markets**

- preferred shape was that of a regular rectangle, often also a simple square shape e.g. market and commercial cities of central and eastern Europe in 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- to maintain uninterrupted enclosing facades, streets do not enter space axially but at corners only.
- note: polygonal - circular market spaces are not typical of pragmatic planning approach of medieval builders [Siena is unique because of its topography].

### **Civic Buildings**

Express pride and wealth of a town's inhabitants and are concentrated around and near market place(s).

#### **Town Hall**

- always reserved prime site on main market square where their scale and size provides striking contrast to other buildings in the area.
- often positioned opposite town church (cathedral) or even secular ruler's castle.
- symbol of autonomy, jurisdiction, wealth they range from proud and magnificent town halls of Hanseatic Cities of northern Europe to small and poor town halls of Southern Germany and Austria.
- seat of town councils i.e. local government. Councils had splendid seals: town corporation could act in its own right and bind itself legally by letter and seal.

#### **Guild Hall**

- besides church, the most important representative of corporate life

#### **Hospital**

- to care for old and poor
- set up by holy orders

### **Colleges**

- first specialised elements of university life.

### **Arsenals      Fountains**

### **City Walls, Gates, Towers**

- determine outline and general appearance of medieval city.
- give medieval community its strongest characteristic of homogeneity.
- continue the tradition we saw in Antiquity of a clear contrast between urban ---> and ---> rural

### **Walls**

- defend city, people, animals and property
- symbolise to outside world a town's strength & political independence *note:* destruction of urban wall means loss of freedom
- large proportion of public funds devoted to construct, maintain and extend urban fortifications
- ring of wall does, naturally, constrict inhabitant's freedom of movement and available urban space; when town too crowded extensions built.
- construction derived from techniques of fortress architecture: shortest circumference enclosing largest area i.e. circular and square fortifications preferred.
- smaller settlements cannot afford wall, therefore perimeter building ring doubles as fortification.

### **Gates**

- represent link with the outside world
- major roads lead from gates to other towns etc.
- control and customs point for people and goods
- strategically represent weakness in defensive system, therefore often flanked by towers.

### **Towers**

- to defend walls and city and afford the outflanking of enemy (crossfire)
- re-inforce walls structurally
- ballistically represent an advantage as can fire further away

### **Cathedral, Church**

- these often attained excessive size and magnificence when compared to the number of inhabitants of the city.
- dominated not only skyline but frequently also surrounding countryside e.g. Chartres Cathedral
- immensely wealthy, owning territory within and without the city
- organ of religion and all social services: care of sick and aged, shelter for passing travellers, education.

### **Streets**

#### Early Medieval Period

- based on established 'long distance' tracks, determined by contours (geomorphology street networks)
- often maze-like, with no apparent logical pattern, but *functional*. Differentiation of commercial uses along different streets developed.
- winding narrow streets helped to protect unglazed windows (with probably, leather flaps) from bitter winds and prevented easy conquest by invaders.

### High Medieval Period

- rational and geometric street systems (rectilinear) particularly associated with New Town Foundations.

*Social structure is usually reflected in street networks and property patterns:*

- street width
- building block depth
- block size
- individual neighbourhoods/districts reflect a *homogenous* architecture and social strata

### **Conclusion**

Medieval town design was refined through a process of development lasting several centuries; it produced both *individual* and *typical* solutions in the grouping and sequence of building elements. It was particularly successful in developing dominant focal elements with the city and in *their* use to symbolise the tension between the various contemporary powers.

The beauty of the medieval city is derived from its underlying **order**. This does not mean that everything is tidy and in its place (18<sup>th</sup> C. cities had order too!) but refers to a much higher order which rules every aspect of urban life: the common belief in an allpowerful God before whom all and everything is small and equal.

Medieval Architecture and Urban Design served this God; together, they display a rank order of values.



## CHARTERS, RIGHTS, & PRIVILEGES

Medieval cities emerged under the shadow of the two traditional and dominant powers of the times: the **secular** power and the **ecclesiastical** power.

Medieval history is largely characterized by the struggle of the rapidly expanding middle class or 'bourgeoisie', constituting the urban population, to wrest a measure of power away from the church and the secular lords.

During the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, many towns gain the essential municipal institutions which were to be the basis of their later constitutions. Like Feudalism, these rights and institutions arise out of the common needs of the growing middle class.

*The middle class wanted four things:*

1. Personal liberty to come and go at liberty ( especially merchants)
2. Special tribunals to deal effectively with disputes and problems peculiar to trade; and release it from the multiplicity of feudal, ecclesiastical and military jurisdictions.
3. A penal code which would guarantee security.
4. Abolition of limitation on possession and acquisition of land.

**Note:** Personal liberty was not claimed as a natural right; it was sought only for the advantages it confirmed.

The **Lords** were no match against real economic expertise and the wealth, in solid gold, of the rich, successful **merchants** class. In time, the following powers soon slipped out of the Lords' grasp:

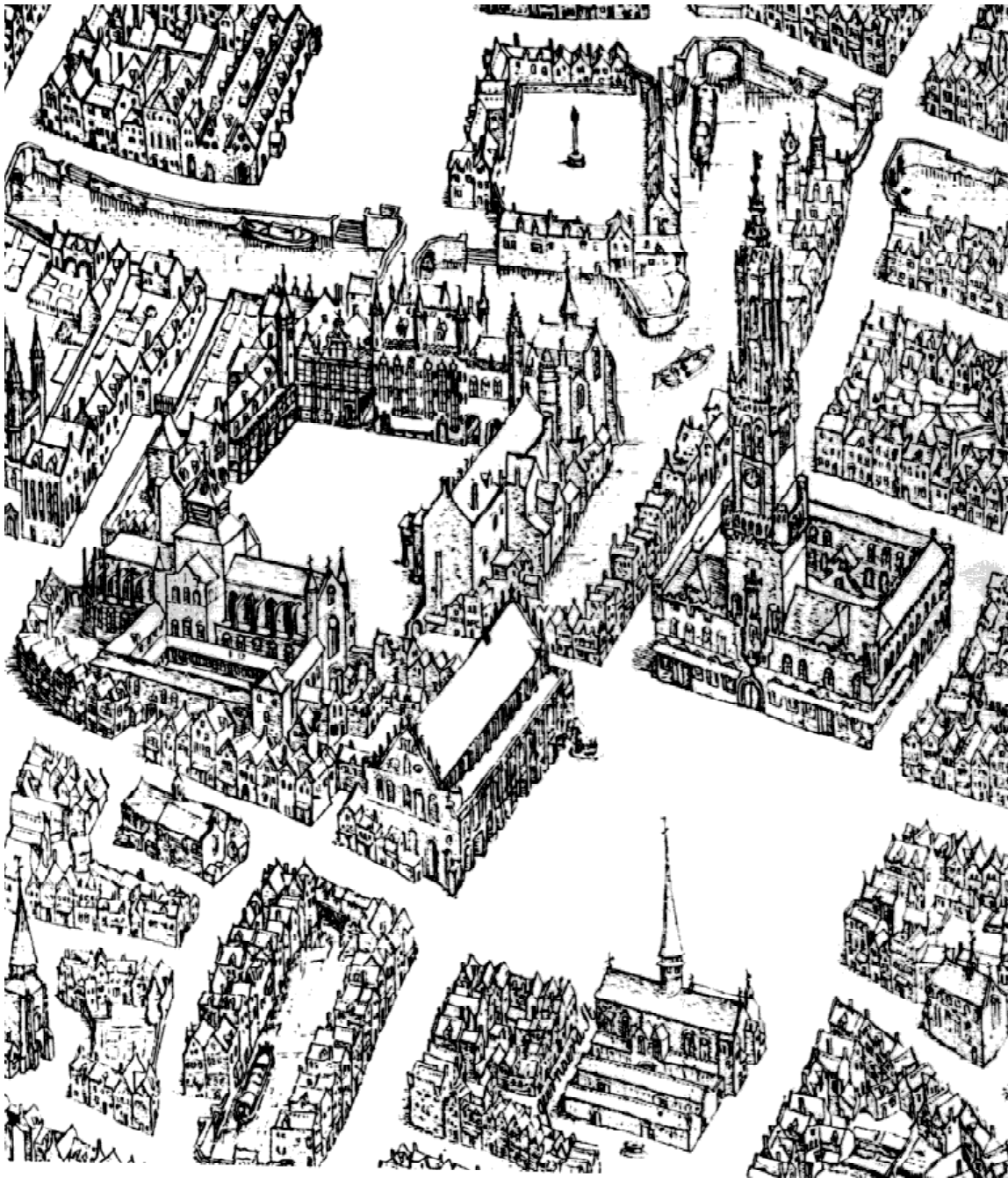
- control of markets
  - the provision and supervision of trades
  - regulation of weights and measures
  - possession of the very valuable market buildings
- and into hand of the town's people, particularly its upper (wealthy) merchant class.

Rights and privileges were granted to cities in different degrees, at different times depending on the locality, the needs of the urban populations and, ultimately, on their economic strength.

Many of the obvious and traditional rights of sovereigns e.g. military and judicial sovereignty, slowly fell into the hands in the larger towns.

The development of (some) urban autonomy occurred simultaneously with the transition from the personal to the territorial principle in law. The long tradition of personal bondage disappeared within (some) urban walls while the feudal structure of society with its many dependent relationships was broken or diminished in many towns and cities of the late middle ages.

**Medieval cities became both protectors and symbols of civic rights and liberties; they were legally protected enclaves of freedom and independence amongst the feudal ocean around them.**



View of BOURG's civic centre  
Grand' Place (Market Place)  
in 1562

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**1. Population (in millions):**

|                         | 800-900 A.D. | around 1300 | around 1500 |
|-------------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| Byzantine Empire        | 10.7         | 13          |             |
| Carolingian Empire      | 10           |             |             |
| Italy                   | 4            | 9           | 8.85        |
| Holy Roman Empire       |              |             | 7           |
| Great Britain           | 0.8          | 3.7         | 3.2         |
| France                  | 6 [Gaul]     | 17.6        | 15          |
| Low Countries           |              | 1.5         | 1           |
| Russia                  |              | 8           | 6           |
| Iberia                  | 4            | 9.5         | 8.3         |
| Islamic Empire          | 23.3         |             |             |
| Syria                   | 4            | 2.7         | 2           |
| Egypt                   | 3            | 3           | 2.5         |
| Tigris-Euphrates Valley | 9.1          |             | 5           |
| North Africa            | 1.9          |             |             |

**2. Sex Ratio**

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Pre-Plague England           | 133 |
| Pozzuoli 15 <sup>th</sup> c. | 123 |
| Siena 15 <sup>th</sup> c.    | 105 |

**3. Expectation of Life (Medieval England)**

| Age | Years of Life Remaining for those born: |           |           |
|-----|---|-----------|-----------|
|     | before 1276                             | 1326-1346 | 1426-1450 |
| 10  | 36.32                                   | 28.11     | 36.62     |
| 20  | 28.74                                   | 22.13     | 30.89     |
| 30  | 22.80                                   | 21.09     | 25.54     |
| 40  | 17.83                                   | 17.68     | 21.7      |
| 50  | 12.7                                    | 14.29     | 18.09     |
| 60  | 9.42                                    | 10.81     | 11.11     |

**4. Average Age at Marriage**

|                             |                                 |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| European Noble Women        | about 20 years                  |
| Peasants (English Village): | 27.6 for men and 24.7 for women |

**5. Birth Rate** 50-35/thousand

**6. Death Rate** 40-30/thousand

Source: Russell, J.C. (1958) *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, Volume 43, Part 3, Philadelphia, Pa.