# Urban History

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# The “Dark Ages”

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## The decline of the Roman Empire

- The Roman Empire was a Mediterranean commonwealth, depending on the sea trade routes.
- After its decline in the 4th c. the sea commerce continued to be active until the 6th c., in contrast with the inland provinces.
- The dream of the Germanic tribes invading the territory, was to settle down.
  They were unable and didn’t want to do without the Roman civilization.
  They barbarized it, but they didn’t consciously germanize it.
- The Roman civilization prevailed over the conquerors by the Church, by the Latin language and by its institutions and law.

## The indoor factors on the European urban changes:

- In the course of the invasion of the Germanic tribes some frontier cities were destroyed, but the majority survived
- The Church patterned the religious districts after the administrative districts of the Empire: the diocese corresponded to the civitas (now “episcopal city”)
- The municipal institutions kept their decuriones – a corps of magistrates provided with a judicial and administrative authority
- The cities were as before the centre of economic activity, markets for the surrounding country-side. The commerce developed more highly in proportion to its nearness to the Mediterranean shores.
- But the territory of Europe no longer belonged to a single, centralized State.

## The outdoor factors on the European urban civilization:

- The Islamisation of Persia, Syria, Egypt, Africa and Spain between the 6th and the 8th c. changed the role of the Mediterranean sea to a barrier

- The Islamic conquest separated the West from the East of Europe and caused more changes in the European network of settlements than the invasions of the barbarians from the North

- Europe was forced to live by its own resources.
  The centre of gravity was shifted to the North, to the Frankish Empire

- The Frankish Empire was in difference to the maritime Roman Empire an inland one, defending the sea shores against Saracens and Norsemen.
  It turned to an agricultural State without foreign markets

- The European urban civilization broke step by step with the civilization of the antiquity.
  The commerce was reduced to local and regional scales; the merchants disappeared, so the urban population.

## The organization of the city shape:

The adaptation of the Roman town:

- The urban typology of the Roman Empire remained in the West, as in the East (the Byzantine Empire): a rectangle surrounded by ramparts flanked by towers and communicating with the outside by gates, to the number of four.

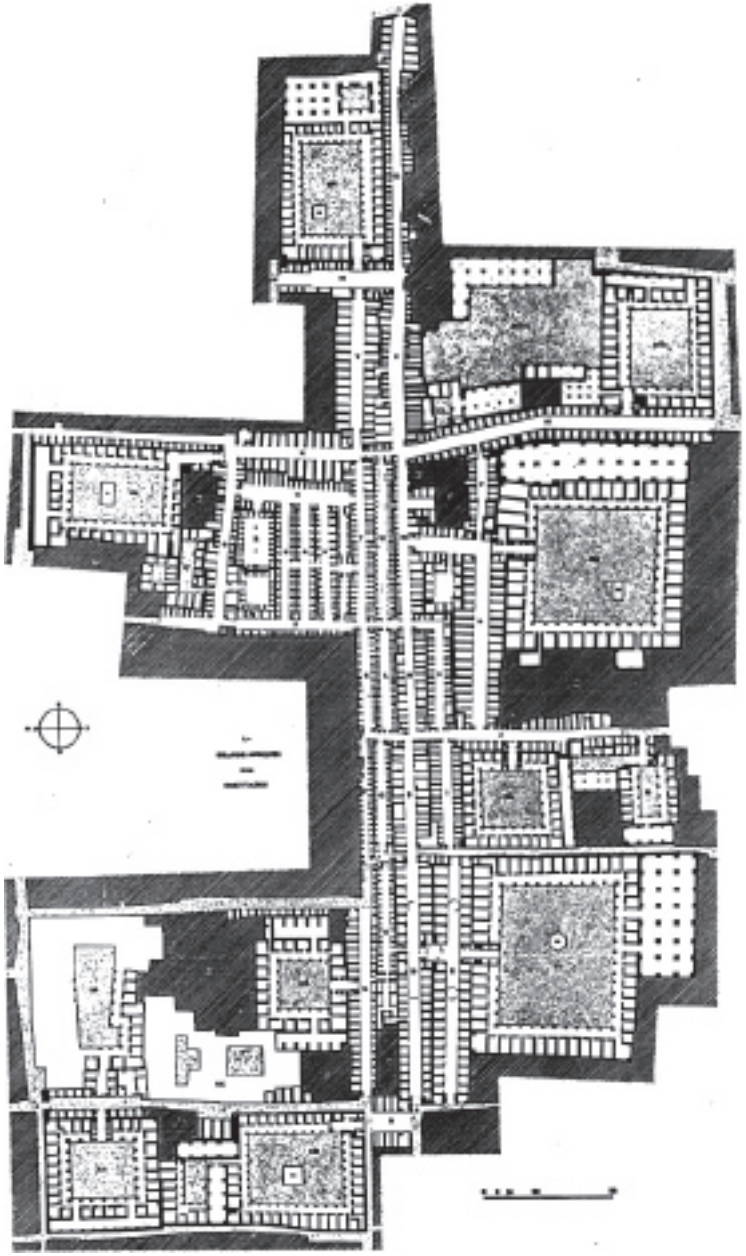
- The case of the adapted and rising city

- The case of the shrinking city: between the houses cultivated fields and gardens were to be found

## Aleppo - bazaar

The adaptation of the Roman grid in the islamic world

Adaptation of the agora into a bazaar under Islamic influences - such transformations were common



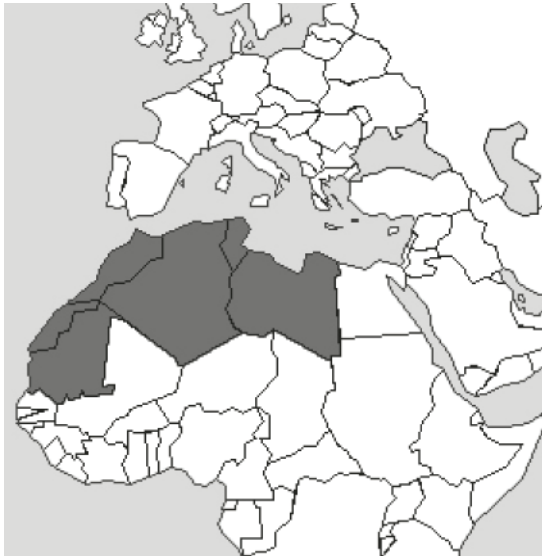
## Damascus - remains of the road network from the classical antiquity

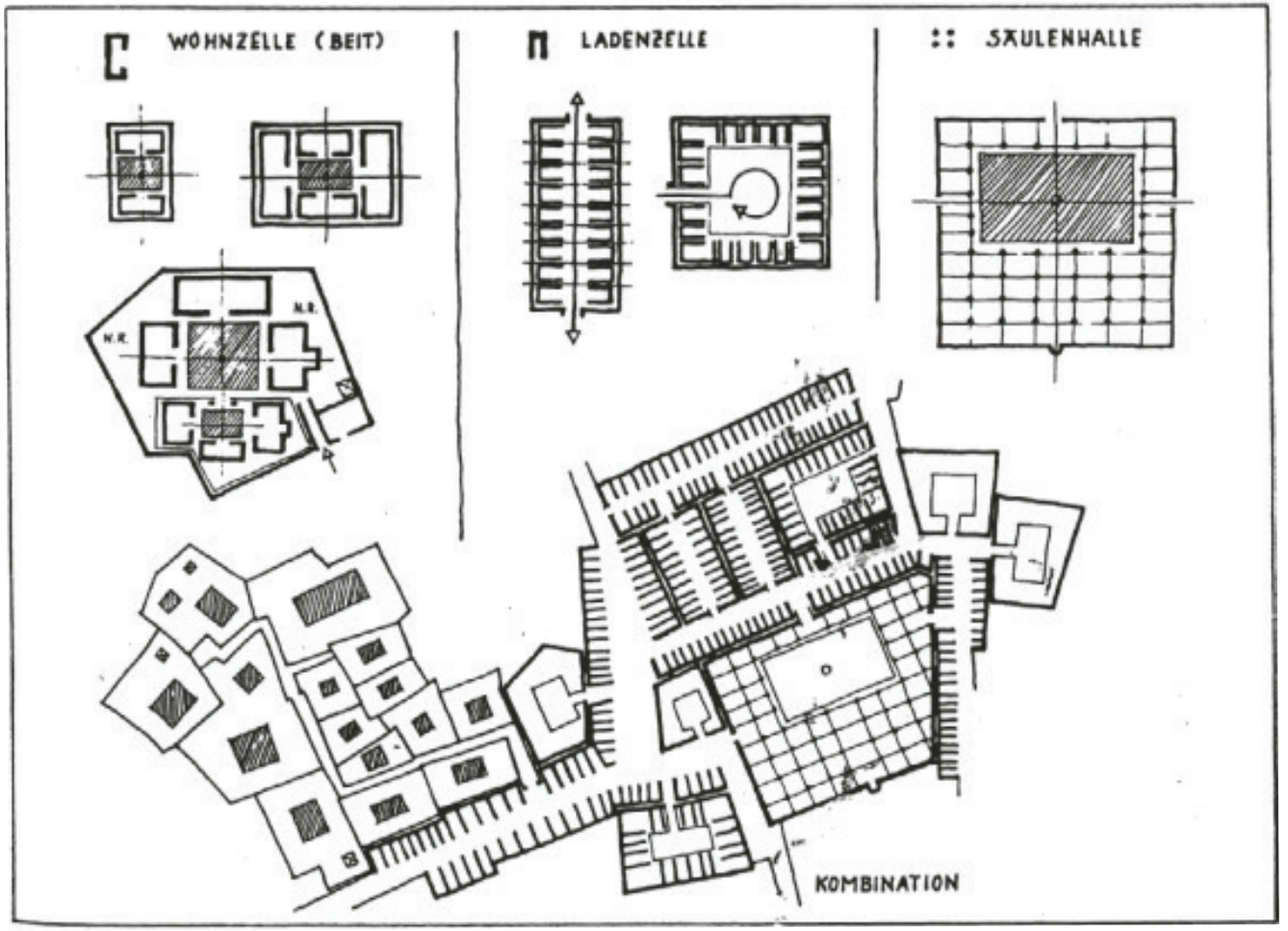
The adaptation of the Roman grid in the islamic world

This example shows the transformation from the orthogonal to the organic system of road networks in islamic countries

## Spatial formation of a city in Maghreb

Maghreb



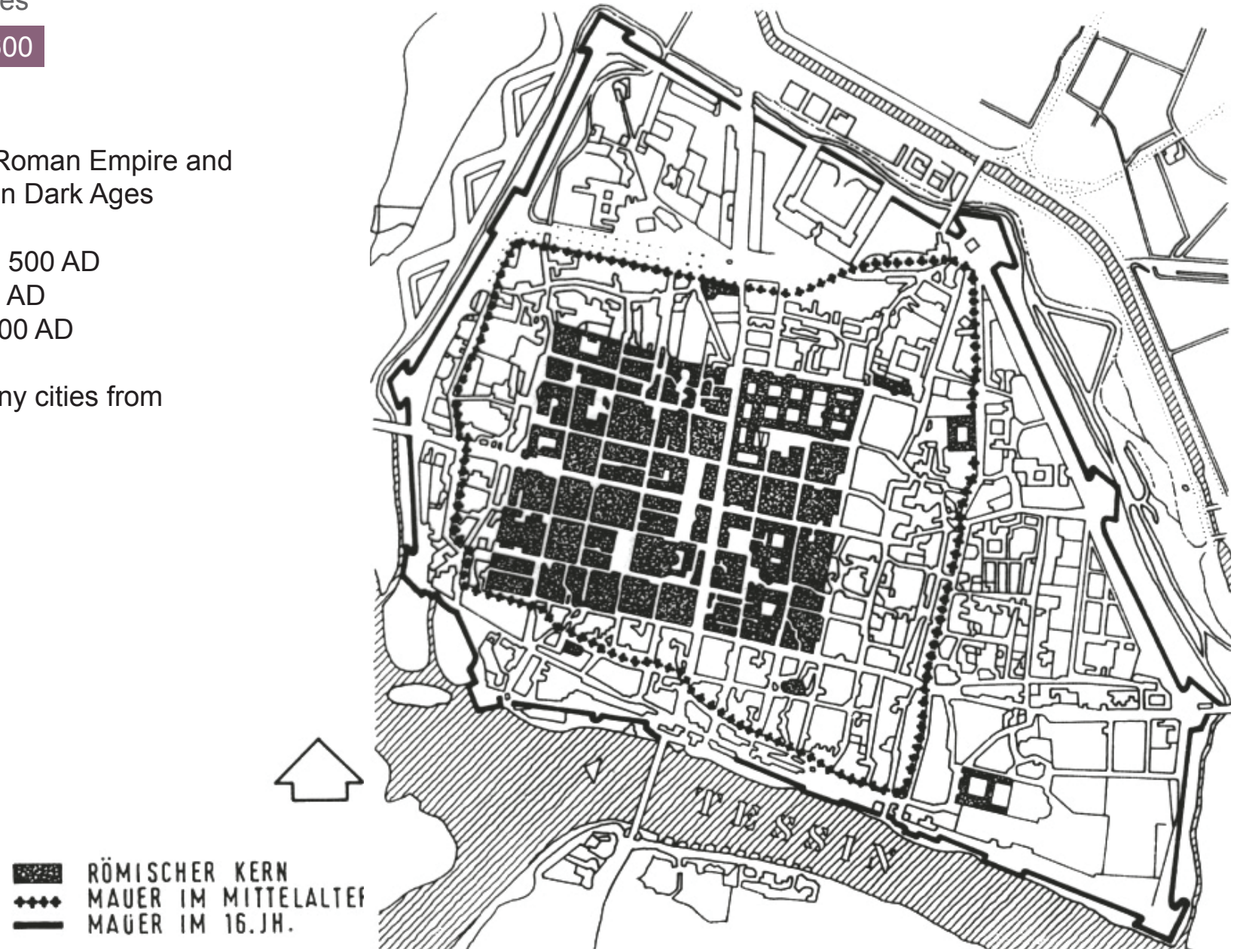


## Pavia - Langobards around 600

476 AD: Fall of the Western Roman Empire and the beginning of the European Dark Ages

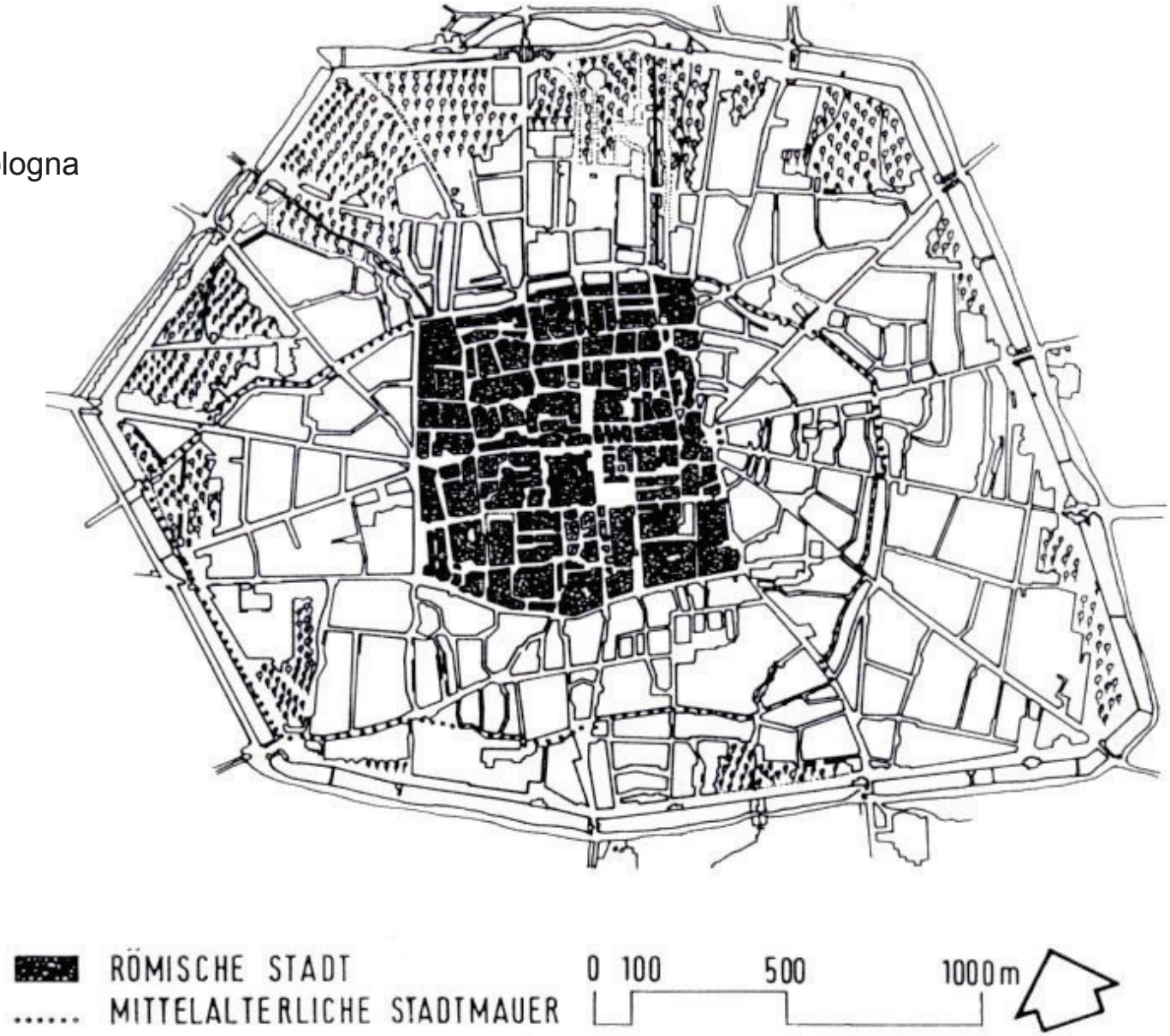
Ostrogoths: Ravenna around 500 AD
Lombards: Pavia around 600 AD
Merovingians: France from 500 AD

Destruction and decay of many cities from the Classical Antiquity
Only half of the cities survive



# Bologna

The adaptation of the Roman grid in Bologna

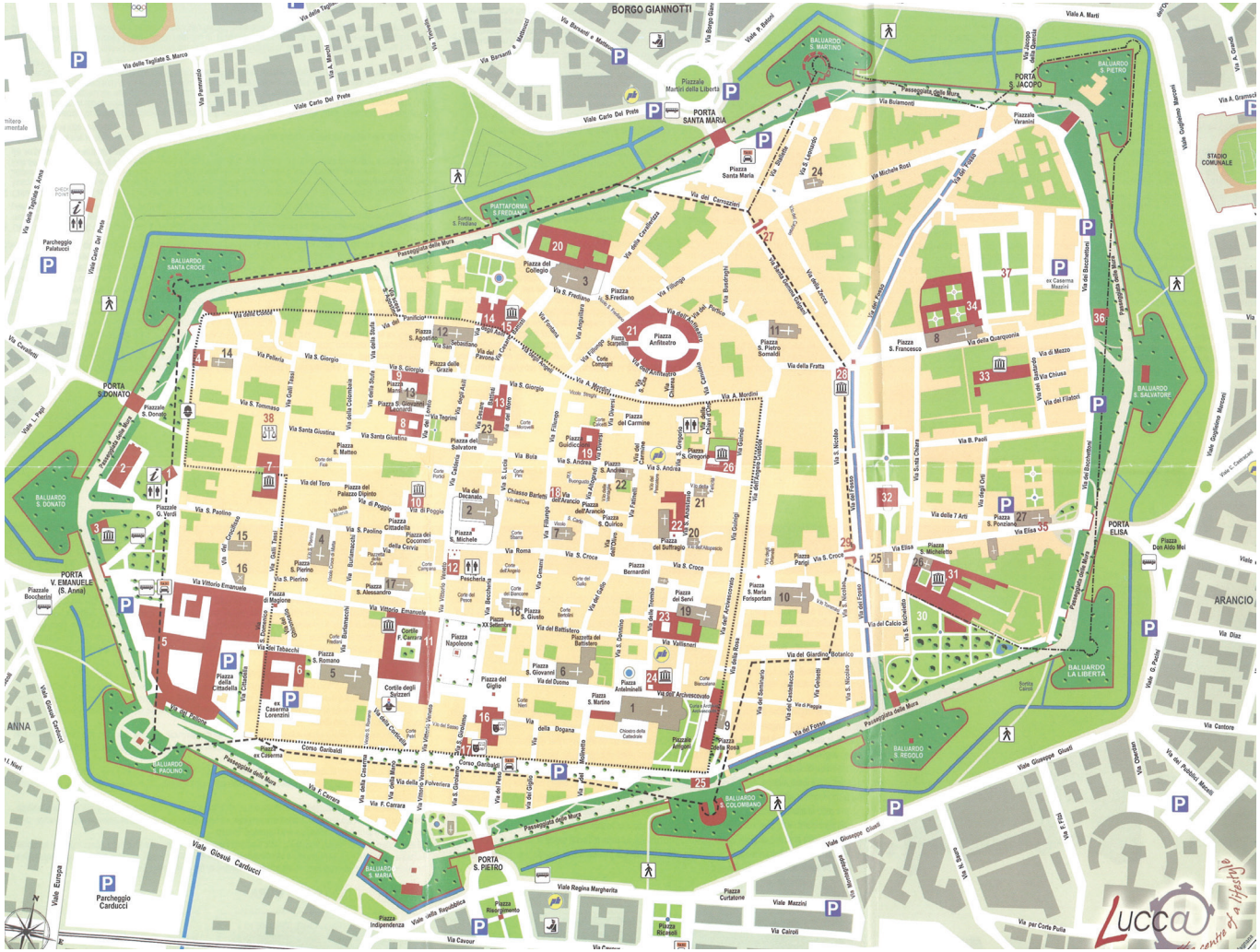


# Lucca

The city of Lucca is an example of the adaptation and extension of the antique Roman town

The antique stadium is turned into the Campo

The fortifications are adapted to the medieval needs


BORGO GIANNOTTI
PORTA SANTA MARIA
PORTA SAN DONATO
PORTA V. EMANUELE (S. Anna)
PORTA S. PIETRO
PORTA ELISA
PORTA S. JACOPO
Piazza del Collegio
Piazza Anfiteatro
Piazza S. Michele
Piazza del Mercato
Piazza del Giglio
Piazza Napoleone
Piazza della Cittadella
Piazza S. Romano
Piazza S. Pietro
Piazza S. Alessandro
Piazza del Carmine
Piazza S. Francesco
Piazza S. Pietro Somaldi
Piazza S. Ponziano
Piazza Santa Maria
Piazza Antelminelli
Piazza del Suffragio
Piazza Bernardini
Piazza del Salvatore
Piazza S. Matteo
Piazza S. Andrea
Piazza S. Gregorio
Piazza S. Quirico
Piazza S. Frediano
Piazza Scarpellini
Piazza Guidiccioni
Piazza del Palazzo Digotto
Piazza del Decumano
Piazza del Cocomero
Piazza della Cervia
Piazza del Peggio
Piazza del Giglio
Piazza del Battistero
Piazza del Duomo
Piazza S. Giusto
Piazza S. Giovanni
Piazza S. Martino
Piazza S. Maria Forisportam
Piazza Parigi
Piazza S. Michelotto
Piazza Don Aldo Mei
Piazza Curtatone
Piazza Risorgimento
Piazza Indipendenza
Piazza Ric-orti
Piazza Varanini
Piazza dei Servi
Piazza del Giardino Botanico
Piazza della Rena
Piazza dell'Arancio
Piazza dell'Anfiteatro
Piazza Michele Rosi
Piazza Giuseppe Mazzini
Piazza dei Cocomeri
Piazza della Fratta
Piazza Citadella
Piazza Antelminelli
Piazza S. Donato
Piazza G. Verdi
Piazza Boccherini
Piazza Martiri della Libertà
Piazza Santa Giustina
Piazza dei Salvatore
Piazza del Toro
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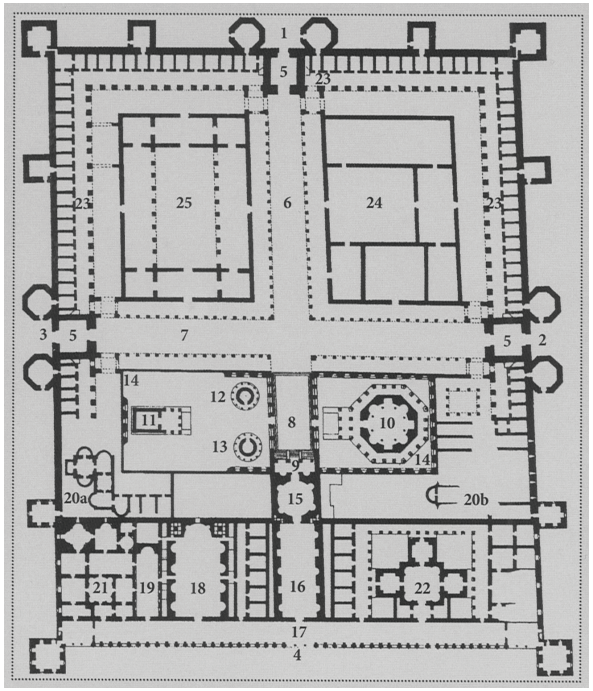
## Split, Palace of Diocletian

The Palace of Diocletian in Split is an example of the adaptation of the antique Roman structures to the medieval needs



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## The organisation of the city:

The fortified settlement:

- The economic base of the State, as of society, was the landlord.
  A new urban typology was established – the settlements on the feet of the fortified residence of the landlord (the Medieval castle), which dominated in the silhouette.
- The burgus (Burg, borogh, bourg, borgo)
  - the walled circular and surrounded by a moat and the tower as a last redoubt of defense;
  - the domus (the residence) of the landlord;
  - the chapel or church

The population of the burgus was a fortress population, not an urban one.
It consisted of a few hundred men.

## The organisation of the city:

New typologies caused by the role of the church and the monasteries:

- The church tower dominating in the silhouette of the city was a new element of the urban shape

- The monasteries were receiving gifts of land.
  Some settlements in front of the monastery started establishing after the 7th c.

## Germanic area

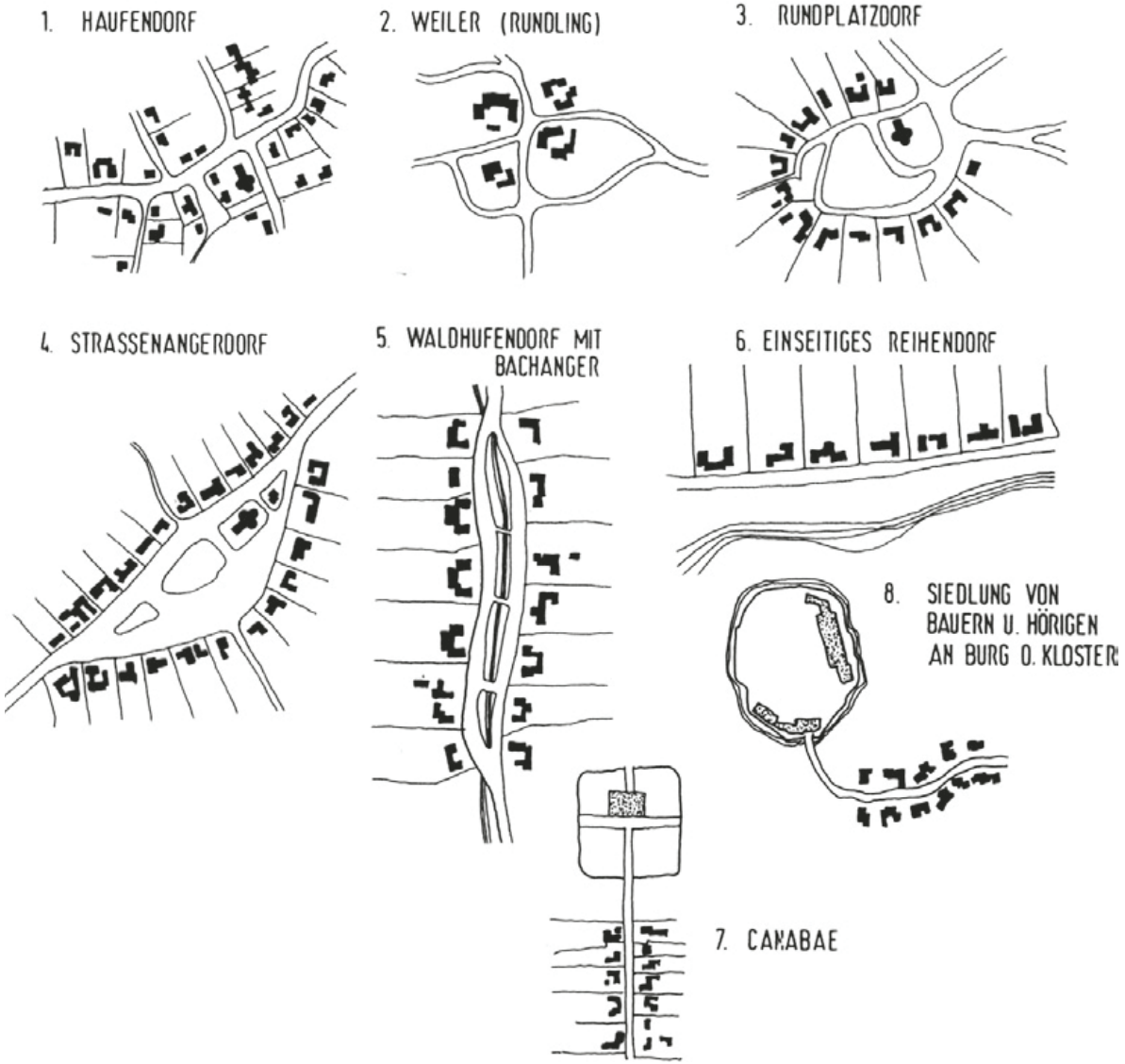
Cities and urban laws do not have much significance
Contempt of the settled way of life

The power is divided and lies in the hands of the Church and the secular rulers (the feudal system)

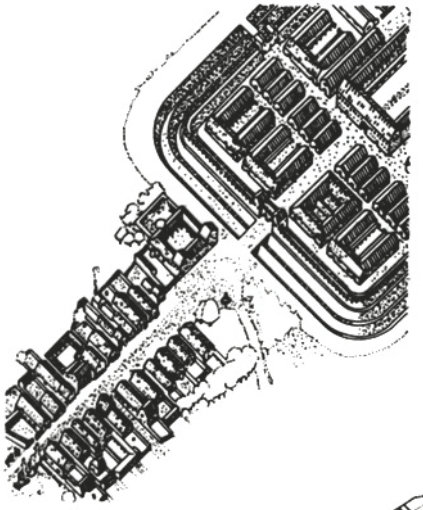
City development impulses:
- bishops have to live in cities (from the First Council of Nicaea in 325)
- tradesmen and craftsmen formed fortified settlements around centers of power: market rights > city rights

Upswing in development from the 9th century onwards: increase in population, Christianity spreads in Central Europe

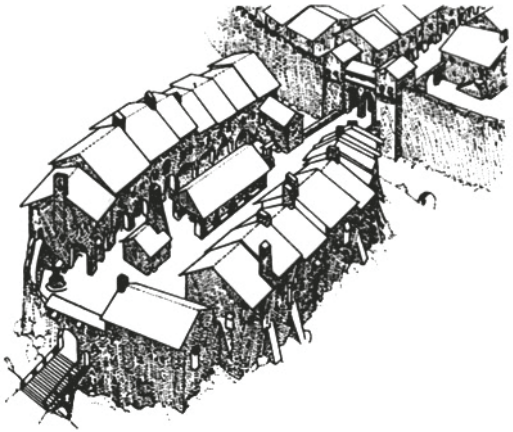
## Village arrangementes in the Germanic area



## Settlements of tradesmen and craftsmen

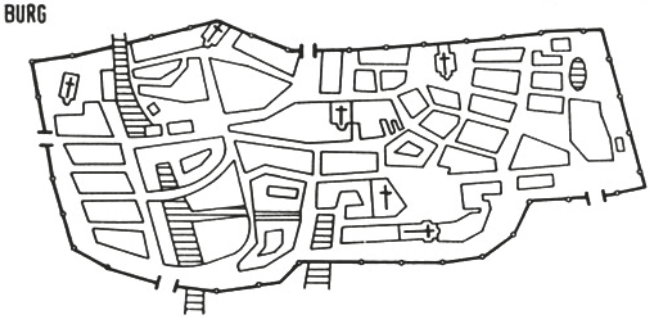


RÖMISCHES MILITÄRLAGER MIT
BÜRGERLICHEN ANSIEDLUNGEN :
CANABAE (NACH VOLCKERS)



BÜRGERLICHE VORSTADT
BURGUM UND CIVITAS
(NACH GRUBER)

WIK STATHE (STADE)
URSPRÜNGLICH EINSEITIG BEBAUTE STRASSE ZWISCHEN HANDELSPLATZ (HAFEN)
UND BURG



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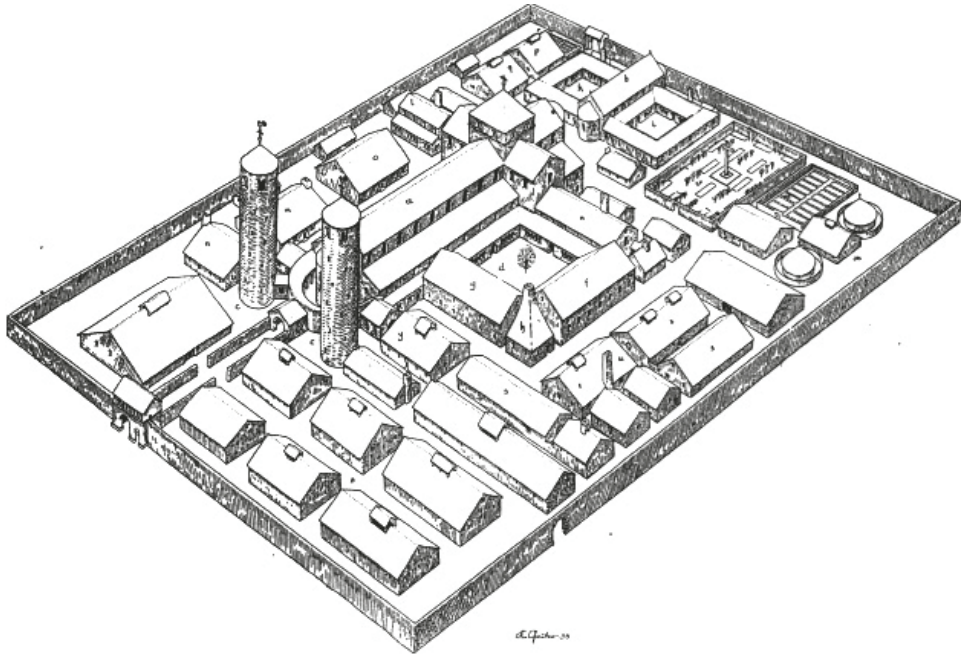
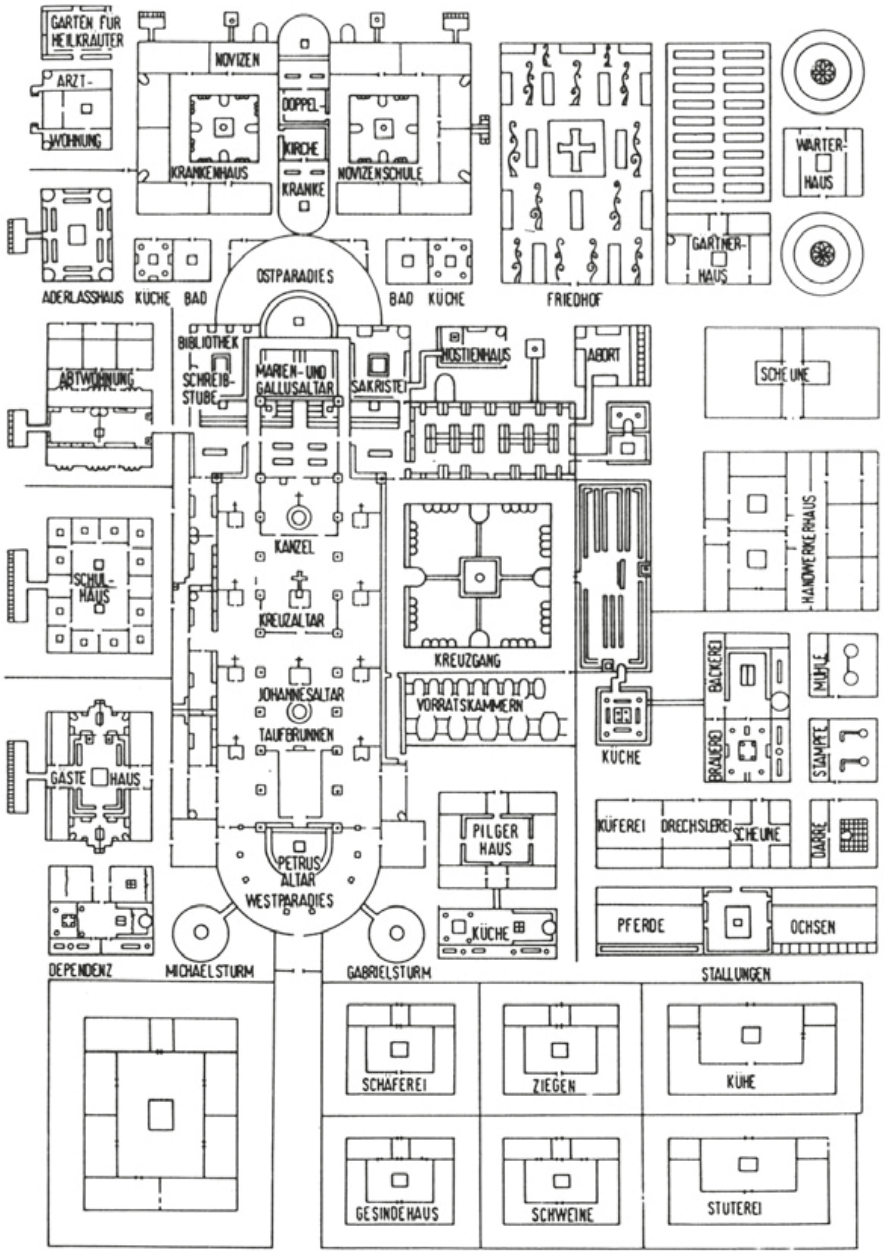
## Monastery of St. Gallen (ca. 820)

Regular design of monasteries - St. Gallen has the exemplary layout

11th-13th century: colonisation of the countryside around the monasteries

Self-supporting complexes of buildings





## The revival of commerce in the Late Middle Age

- The 10th c. was a period of stabilization and relative peace. It marks the end of the invasions of the Norsemen in the West, and the Slavs and Hungarians in the East. Europe “colonised” herself, thanks to the increase of population.

- The need for settlements forced the princes and landowners to extend existing towns or to establish new towns.

- The 11th c. was marked by the revival of the commerce. This revival received its impetus from new centres of activity:
  - Venice in the South
  - the Flamish coast in the Northwest and
  - the Baltic and the North sea (the Hansa Towns).

## The revival of commerce in the Late Middle Age

The change was once again the result of an external stimulus.

- Venice was an isolated outpost of the Byzantine civilisation (Con stantinople was the greatest city in the Mediterranean with a popula-tion of a million in-habitants). Venice profited by the alliance with Byzantine: it owned the pros-perity of her commerce, the higher forms of civilization, the technologies, the business enterprise, the political and administrative organisation.

- The extension of Islam came to an end in the 11th c. The Mediterra-nean remained in the hands of the Christians. Genoa and Pisa fol-lowed soon the example of Venice, but on a more militant way.

- The European waterways and the coasts were a stimulus for a sur-plus of production and extension of commerce. This explained the rise of the commerce in the Netherlands and the economic awaking of Flanders.

- The Scandinavians turned in the 1oth c. away from war to devote themselves to trade. They played the mediators between the Russian cities and Flanders giving a fresh impulse to manufacture.

## The establishing of the merchant class in the Late Middle Age

- Western Europe was definitely transformed in the 12th c. due to the extension of commerce and manufacture. The increase of the population was in direct relation to this phenomenon. It had as a result the detaching from the land to the towns. These were the internal stimulus for an uninterrupted urban growth.

- As agrarian civilization had made of the peasant a man whose normal state was serfdom, trade made of merchants a man whose normal condition was liberty.

- The commercial activities were located outside the existing towns or burgs, because of the lack of space inside. The commercial suburb (the new burg) received more importance for the feudal burg offering the milieu for the urban middle class.

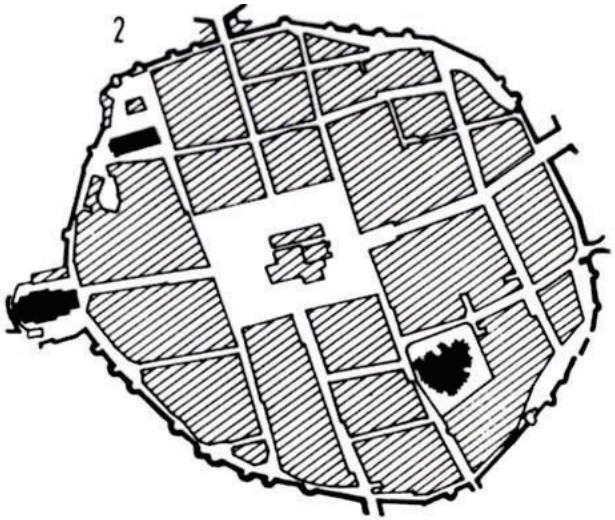
## The establishing of the municipal institutions in the Late Middle Age

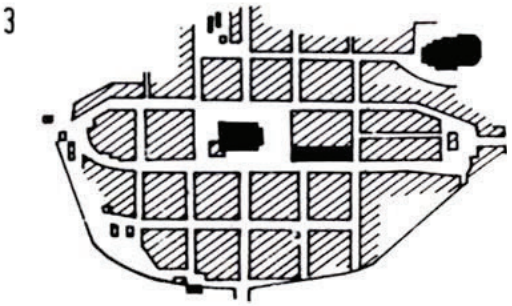
- The suburbs were established on lands owned by the church, the monaster-ies or landlords, which caused conflicts between the old desmenial organisa-tion and the the aspirations of the new middle class.

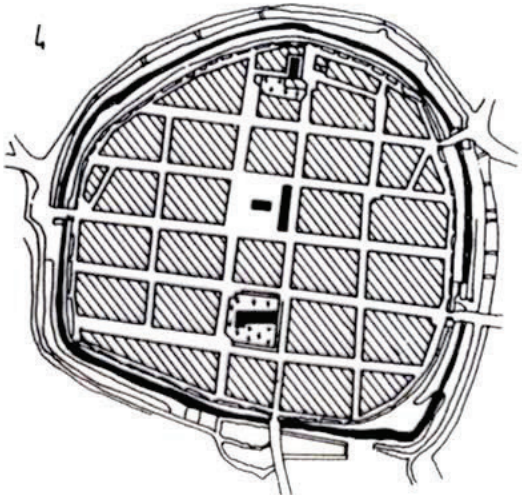
- The monarch was accepted as arbitrator of the quarrel, which meant to rec-ognize his sovereignty. The entry of the middle class on the political scene had as a consequence the weakening of the Feudal State to the advantage of the centralized Monarchical State.

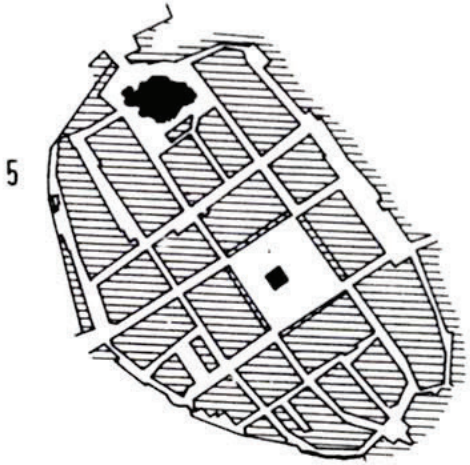
- The political quarrel leaded to the organisation of guilds to defend the interests of the merchants and manufacture owners. The guilds formed, de facto, the functions of communal magistrates in the towns. Little by little the middle class came out as a distinct and privileged group in the midst of the popula-tion in the country, recognized by the authority of the monarch. Since the 12th c. a number of cities were recognized by granted charters as legal territories, provided with spe-cial lows and courts, and a full communal autonomy.

# Colonial cities in the East - 11th to 13th century



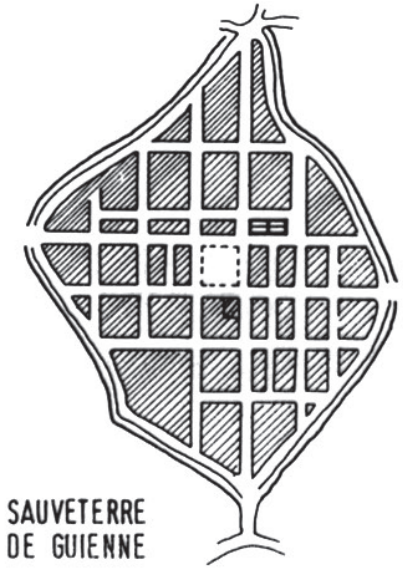



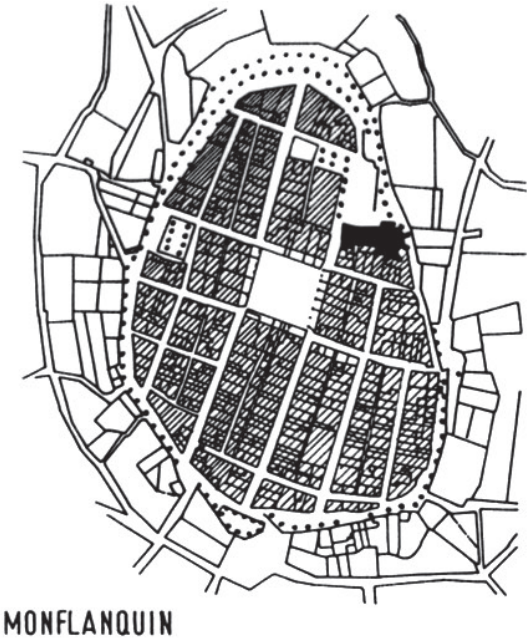

1 Strehlen
2 Reichenbach
3 Gleiwitz
4 Neu-Brandenburg
5 Guhrau

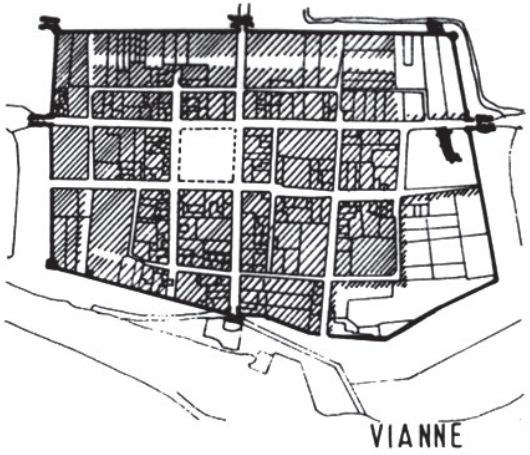
# Bastides

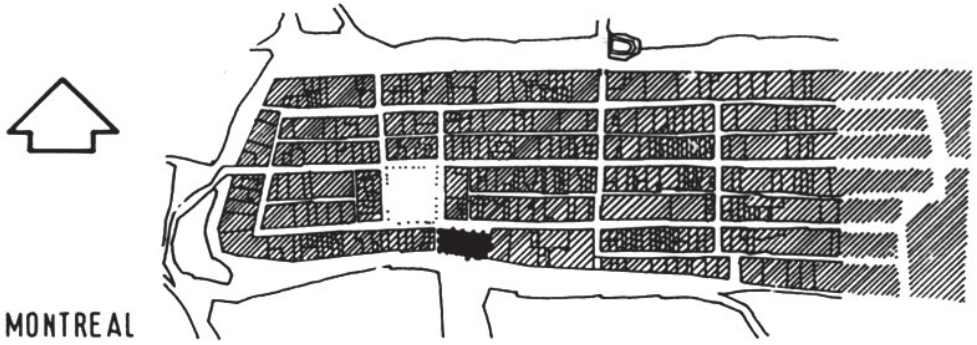
Fortified new towns built in medieval southwest France during the 13th and 14th centuries

Firstly it was decided that a bastide should be built - then its inhabitants were settled

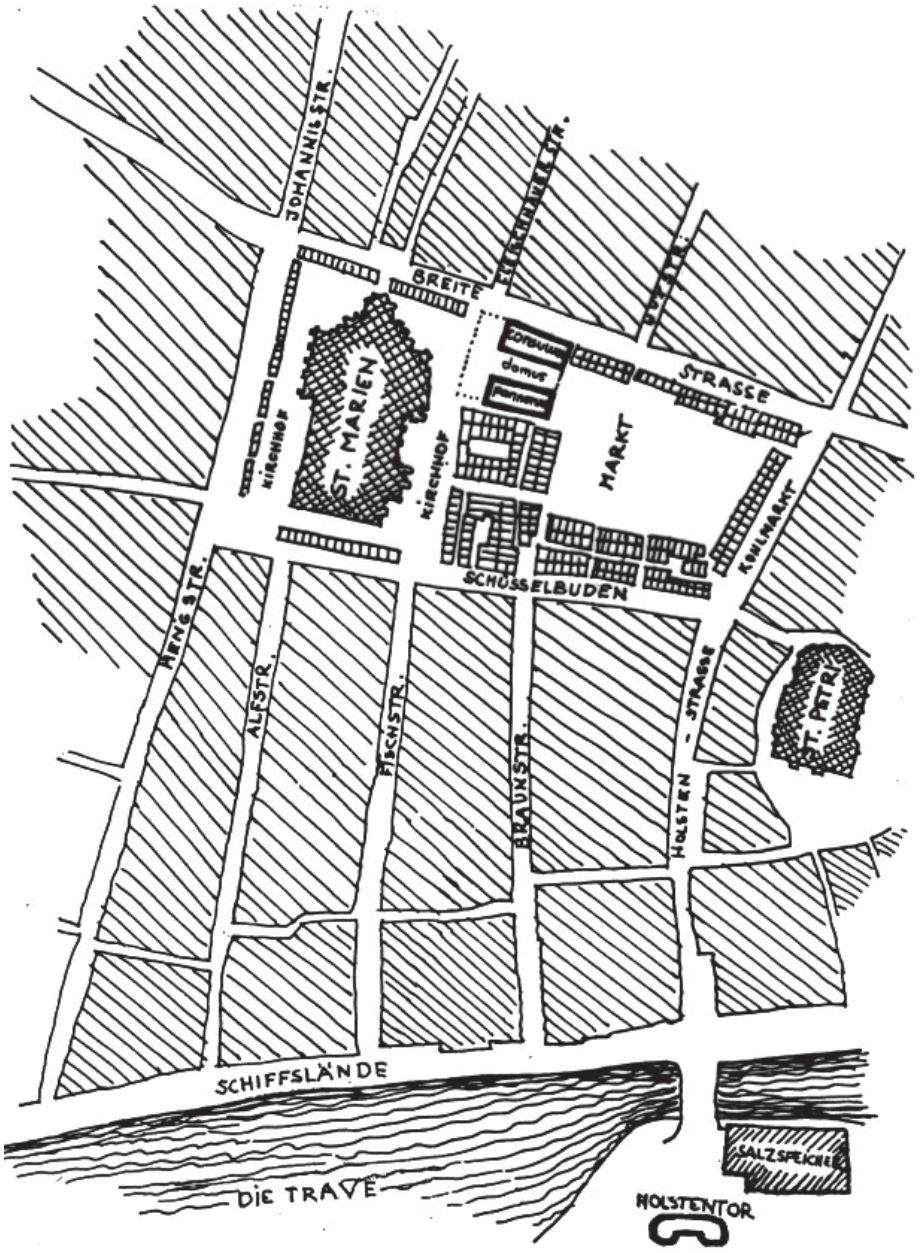




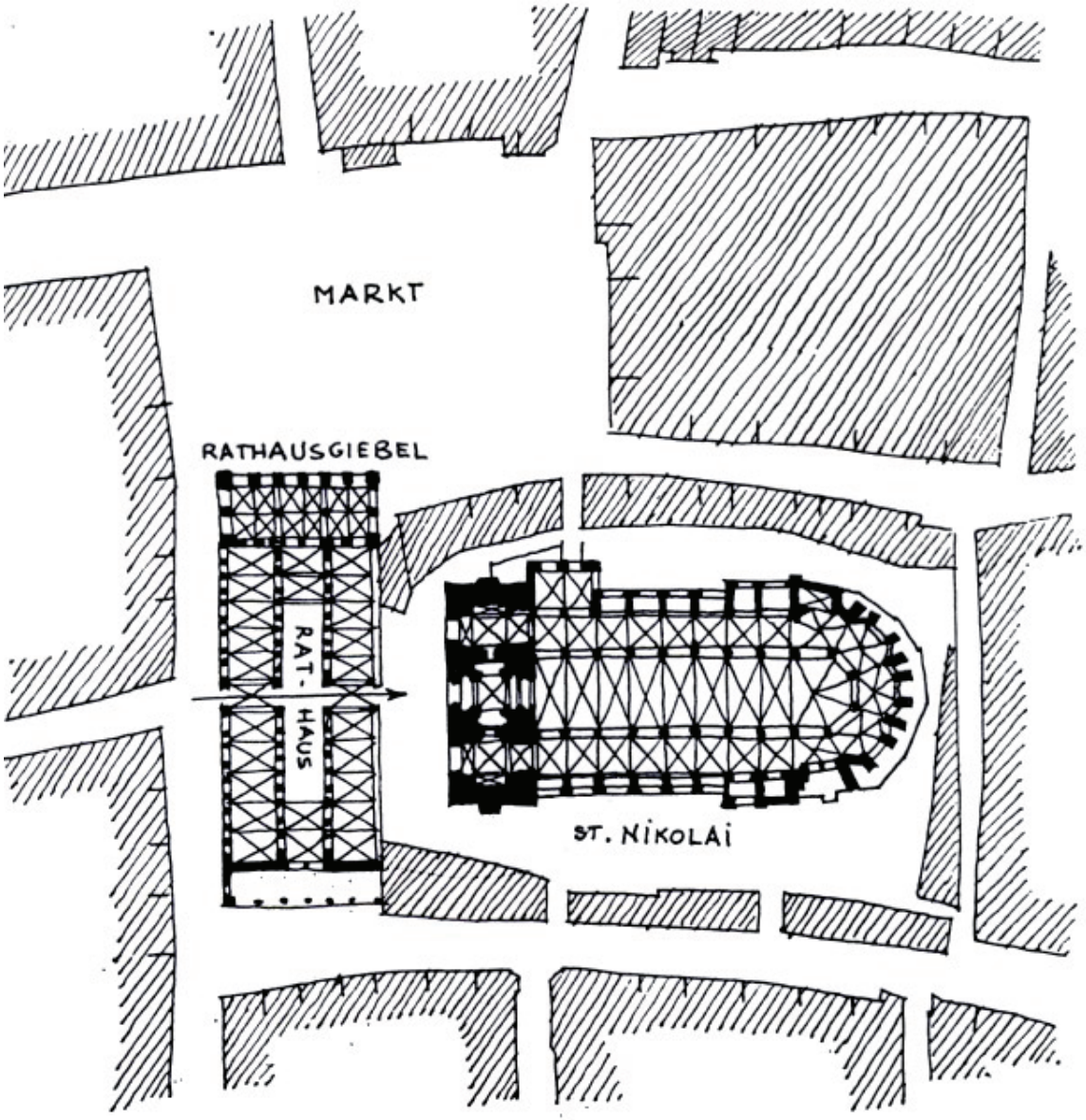



# Lübeck in the early Middle Ages



# Stralsund in the late Middle Ages




Stralsund, Grundriß Rathaus, St. Nikolai und Markt im Spät-Mittelalter

The burgers of the Middle Ages were thus singularly well prepared for the role which they were to play in the two great movements of ideas: the Re-naissance and the Reformation.