URBAN DESIGN IN WESTERN EUROPE
Regime and Architecture, 900–1900

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INTRODUCTION

This book grew out of a sense of uneasiness. The uneasiness, in turn, arose out of the state of cities in the 20th century. Why, when every ancient urban nucleus, even in its reproductions in late medieval, Renaissance, and baroque engravings, right up to the early 19th century, captures the imagination with its order, do the Saturn rings of late 19th and 20th century urban expansion burden it with their disorder? The more the new forms penetrate the old, the more frightening the overall picture becomes. Where in earlier days a small number of laws and ordinances were enough to achieve that order, today the most comprehensive and precise codes no longer suffice to maintain it. What are the causes of such antitheses?

It cannot merely be the fault of architects, their limited ability, their lack of training, their thirst for novelty, their refusal to accept the teachings of the past, their disturbed sense of proportion. But in part it is their fault.

Nor can the blame be ascribed solely to theories of urban design, simplistic concepts of the planning process, lack of scientific investigation into all functions of a city, if such investigation has been undertaken at all. Yet the hasty, incomplete programming of new planning projects is in part to blame.

The reasons must be sought in changes in the general political function of cities. Cities no longer form unities but serve both the interests of the individual and those of the state with its manifold business, the new “one world.” They represent only to the most limited extent an independent body corporate, for their areas of existence are interwoven in different ways, with the states to which they are subordinated and with the rural areas that surround them.¹ The Industrial Revolution, the unprecedented population growth as a result of medical advances, changed sociological conditions, new forms of traffic, the separation of work, living, and leisure areas first stretched the old organizational structures and finally broke them up. De-
spite numerous critical analyses of changed conditions and equally numerous attempts to outline the theoretical prerequisites for change, no one has yet been able successfully to predict or program the way to change. We are surrounded by failures. Historians are powerless to give advice. They can only indicate the reasons for old forms of order, reasons that may still be valid for modern forms.

These reasons lie in overlapping political areas. It has always been known that every important city represented a political fact. Political science arose out of the proposals for a perfect polis. The laws of order which gave form to cities also determine those of the states that have been governed by cities. Constitutions, which regulated the coexistence of men and gods, rulers and ruled, free citizens and tied wage-earners, created for themselves the architectural image appropriate to the occasion. Each city lets us know who governs it and how it is governed. We can read in a skyline or in any ground plan the standing of the controlling powers, whether rivals or mutually supportive: a dynasty, the church and its organizations, the patriciate, the nobility, the merchant class, the craftsmen and their guilds, the associations which served to defend or to oppress the city. New governmental programs always demanded new architectural programs. Every description of the architectural condition is at the same time a description of the economic bases and sociological composition of the population.

Individual institutions have always tried to express the ideals that quickened them. Monumental buildings propagandize for forms of government. They also propagandize for forms of coexistence and for the comprehension of the world and the ultramundane by means of everything that is called art. At the same time, they define, by their appearance, political ideologies, which they elevate to the realm of the ideal—thanks to their status as works of art. The architectural form of churches, city palaces or town halls, cloth merchants’ halls and guildhalls, even the fountain in the market place and its sculpture, bears witness to the meaning of those ideologies. Castle, city walls and their gates, interpret and justify existing orders—or even orders which are sought after. They define ideal notions in an imperishable language and in this way give them a higher reality. The Doric temple, the Gothic cathedral, the Renaissance palazzo, the baroque residence, 19th century museums and the buildings of world expositions, even transportation buildings of the 20th century, airports or broad-spanned bridges, attempt, each in their own way, to interpret existence.

These words should not be taken to mean that I am emphasizing the contrast between the art of the rulers and the misery of the ruled, though
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that contrast has occurred all too often. St. Jerome himself complains that the most magnificent works of art were torn from the sweat and poverty of the poorest members of society. 2 The architectural form of many cities serves as illustration: the citadel and the city of Milan (fig. 96), the episcopal Marienburg in Würzburg and the little burgher town around the market with the Marienkirche in its shadow (fig. 134). The populace, convicts, prisoners-of-war, and slaves were condemned to build tyrants’ castles for their own oppression. Yet, more frequently, we find examples that show how these contradictions were balanced out. The merchant settlements of the early days of European towns—designed to serve a castle which, in its turn, offered them protection—could be mentioned here. 3 We have reports to the effect that participating in the statute labor associated with the building of Gothic cathedrals fulfilled the lives of the population of whole areas of the country. 4 Many later depictions of towns illustrate the fact that political tasks evolved from conditions of tension which could also be mastered architectonically. We shall see this in Venice, in Florence, and in Prague, as in earlier episcopal centers or, later, in modern capital cities. The merchant city and the Louvre in Paris, the City of London, and the City of Westminster are among the most successful solutions to arise from the conflict between king and people. Likewise, architectural masterpieces grew out of the cooperation between all classes of the population: the city churches of the free imperial cities, the colonial cities of the Hanseatic League, and Amsterdam in the Golden Age. Prince Eugene was to erect the Belvedere both as a symbol of the new “peace style,” after his victories over the Turks, and as a way of creating jobs for the veterans of his wars (see chap. 7). At all events, we must closely examine the attitudes and convictions of the various periods if we are to evaluate the task set for each building in the society that built it or saw it built.

Every architectural work can be regarded as a sign of the power, wealth, idealism, even the misery of its builders and their contemporaries. A good farmhouse not only serves its purpose; it reflects, thanks to its architectural and decorative forms, the worldview in which the farmer’s family feels secure. Only by this means does it become a form of architecture in its own artistic genre. A good town house can be perceived as a textbook of bourgeois virtues. It is the area in which bourgeois diligence, sense of order, cleanliness, and careful accounting are all cultivated. 5 The rows of houses in a city show the efforts of families to regulate and distinguish themselves. If a good monastery confirmed by its appearance the ordering of life for which the monks had left the world, then in other forms,
every palace, every princely castle, every city hall, every cloth hall, cathedral, or city church tries to do the same thing.

It will be shown again and again that these works serve an institution, whether it be a state or a family, and illustrate, by their architectural form, that institution’s essence, its goals, and its ambitions. The Palazzo Strozzi advertises the financial might of the Strozzi bankers and bears witness to their self-confidence. The Palazzo Farnese needed a Michelangelo to give it that form which, in their eyes, was suited to the House of Farnese. A family’s house stands for that family and thus becomes a self-representation of the rank and pretensions of that family within the social order in which it lives. Every architectural patron identifies himself, and the institution into which he is coordinated and to which he is subordinated, with the building he is having built. A city, as an all-encompassing institution, is composed of a multitude of different institutions. A prerequisite for its success as an architectural and political unit is for every building to take the form that is suited to it and yet at the same time stand on the exact spot in the overall architectural fabric that corresponds to its function and significance. For the topological harmony of a city is among the essential characteristics for its perfection. It was achieved in London and Berlin in the 18th century just as it was in such successful structures as the Piazza San Pietro, the Piazza San Marco, the Maximilianstraße in Augsburg, the market district in Lübeck, or the Ringstraße in Vienna. We read the plans of Munich, Zürich, or Prague with a more precise understanding if we bear in mind the dependence of the topographical situation upon the political tasks assigned to the monumental buildings. When the iconological plan of individual buildings and groups of buildings can be deciphered, every form of architecture gains in clarity.6 The cathedral of St. Vitus in Prague can only be fully understood by someone who grasps the political meaning of its relation to the imperial palace of Charles IV.7 The architectural form of the cathedral of St. Stephen in Vienna only reveals itself to someone who can extract from it the struggle for influence between the citizenry, the ecclesiastical authorities, and the ducal house.8 The contrast between the palaces of Versailles and Sanssouci can only be described properly if we are conscious of the dependence of the building plans and forms—down to the last decorative detail—upon the different views of the state entertained by the kings who built them.

The dependence of every architectural form upon an ideology and a set of ideals which is above and beyond it comes from the fact that all monumental buildings owe their existence to unavoidable historical pressures. Victories sparked euphoria and led to projects that could not be re-
alized even over the course of centuries. The first plan of the new cathedral in Pisa, after the victory over the Arabs before Palermo in 1063, is an early example (fig. 4). We do not know how many of the later buildings on the cathedral square were projected at the same time. Political or economic successes found their expression in monumental buildings that far surpassed any need. The Gothic cathedral, just as much as the baroque castle, derived from such historical pressures. Only that set of ideals to which all the leading spirits of every community felt themselves attached was able to create great architecture. And if the rationalism of the Enlightenment had not already been transcended in the Napoleonic period, more mundane forms of architecture would have been able to prevail everywhere.  

Pressure forced the bishops of Laon, Chartres, and Amiens to build cathedrals of a size and luxury completely beyond the scale of all earlier, or even later, buildings in these cities. And it was an all-subordinating force that made the citizens of Florence or Siena, Ulm or Nördlingen disposed to erect their enormous city churches: these were ventures whose cost could not be calculated financially or statistically in advance. Such pressures became apparent wherever a prince built himself a castle on an overwhelming scale in order to govern a city or where citizens exhausted the means earmarked for the defense of their freedom by building extensive systems of fortification. Rome, in the 17th century, could do nothing but build monument after monument to that successful Counterreformation it had striven for, while Amsterdam, at the same time, felt the necessity of documenting, in new building programs, the victory of its Calvinistic citizens over the aristocratic world of Catholic absolutism. For similar reasons, many monarchs managed to forget the misery of their people so that they could build their massive palaces and gardens—Versailles and Heidelberg, the court buildings of Kassel and Nancy. Max Emmanuel of Bavaria, after the War of the Spanish Succession, in which he personally sustained many losses and his country was ruined by the Austrian occupation, felt bound to give expression to his return to power in new and expanded castle complexes. Nymphenburg, Schleißheim, Fürstenried, and Dachau were all completed at the same time. Was it really “fictional history,” as Dehio maintains, or ruthless libertinage, as the romantic bourgeois averred, or merely the documentation of political conditions themselves, in a manner appropriate to the time? Buildings were to testify to the success of a form of state, and, where they have been preserved, they have performed this task to the present day. Cologne has remained the city of its cathedral, Paris the city of its royal buildings, Lübeck the city of the burgher cathedral. The sum of the
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history of all successful cities is condensed in their outward form. Regimes which went into debt in order to erect buildings that illustrated the ideals of their age have always been justified by posterity. To possess an urban history means, for a community, always matching the architectural tasks of the day to changed political, economic, and sociological conditions. Centers that are famous as masterpieces of urban design have been able to do this for centuries.

This principle compels me to treat only successful cities in this book. In the examples offered, political success will always correspond to aesthetic success. Cities of this sort were the result of fruitful developments. Every given situation became the starting point for continuing creative activities.

I use the term “development” in the way technology uses it, not in the way biology does. Developments in urban design are completed neither of their own accord nor merely as a result of external pressures. They are the result of creative concerns that repeat themselves. The same process is at work as that by which motors, rockets, new chemical compounds, whole computer systems are built. The condition for all successful cities was the creativity of generations of researchers. New experiments could be based on the results of earlier ones. People believed in the power of time and in the continuing development of greater capabilities. Often it was impossible to calculate in advance how many years would be needed to reach the goals that had been set. “Rome was not built in a day” is an apt proverb. Successful groupings of buildings, too, were the results of such developments. It is true that, in contrast to progress in the engineering sciences, the final goal itself could not be sketched out in advance. But cities, like engineering achievements, are the result of a self-renewing power of design. The development of a city like Hildesheim (fig. 13), of the municipality of Siena (fig. 30), or of St. Petersburg (fig. 146) as the seat of a court, offer the same illustrative material as those great ensembles I have already mentioned—the Piazza San Pietro in Rome, the Piazza San Marco in Venice, the royal axis in Paris, the political topography of London, or even a single monumental work that neither was planned nor could be built as one process. For these works were never built in the way they were projected at a given time, and they were never planned in the way they were built. Often decades, sometimes centuries, of work went into their embellishment, and a change in political or governmental thought always meant a change in the building program.

For the moving force in architectonic developments is history itself.
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Changes in the political situation make demands upon design which can only be met with creative ideas.

The difference between planned or “laid out” cities and cities that have grown seems ineradicable. These concepts, precisely because they are opposing ones, become imprecise. The architectural form of successful cities, as it appears to our eyes, is neither planned nor grown. In the face of achievements in urban design and in the face of urban personalities like Rome or Vienna, London or Amsterdam, Prague or Cologne, or even more modest centers like Mantua, Parma, Landshut, and Ulm, such distinctions serve no purpose, unless the aim is to contrast order to excrecence, which can be seen in almost all cities. It was precisely the “grown” towns of the Middle Ages that were perfectly ordered organisms. Many of the “planned,” ideal cities of the Renaissance proved incapable of functioning (see chap. 3). In modern planning we experience the strange contrast of chaos and vacuum among the rows of houses along regular networks of streets. All forms of overplanning prevent order. For in successful urban centers, planning was such that the pressures of development were overcome creatively—pressures that changed from one decade to another. In those cases where the political forces responsible for design slackened and left the road clear for excrecences, the attempt was subsequently made to subordinate these to the laws of order. Urban design became slum clearance.

Even in the most successful cities there were developments in which the principle of inertia, which caused decay, was more powerful than the countercurrents of order. When we read descriptions of Paris or London in the Middle Ages or even the baroque period, of the traffic conditions in Milan or Naples from the 16th to 18th centuries, in Nuremberg too, even in Berlin and Vienna, any romantic transfiguration of the past seems out of place. The forces which promoted order proved over and over again too weak to prevent the streets from becoming clogged. Individual districts in many cities gradually became enclaves, completely closed off. They became districts in which laws of the state could not be enforced—zones of insecurity. In Palermo and many oriental cities we can still experience this process. Such areas are reappearing in New York and San Francisco. At other times, streets turned into workshops for craftsmen, as these were forced out of their dingy hovels. Medieval town statutes, especially in Italy, are filled with ordinances that try to regulate working life on the streets. The provisions for maintaining a sewage system were disproportionate to the amount of refuse deposited, and the architectural situation prevented any effective
sanitary measures. Traffic accidents and the noise of traffic were even more of a threat than they are today. Neither the construction of houses nor of hospitals could diminish the social misery. Conditions in the overcrowded Parisian hospitals were just as terrible as in the equally overcrowded prisons of London, Naples, or Madrid. Countermeasures were hopelessly few and were only carried out when the economy was flourishing. The enormous optimism to which monumental buildings owe their construction was not, in many cases, confirmed by historical developments. Incomplete projects determined the appearance of many cities for centuries. For generations, people in Cologne, Siena, or Beauvais lived on the edge of the same building sites.

The Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the baroque were all confronted with the same set of problems, which arose again and again from the fact that cities, like each of the monumental complexes within them, need an active life if they are not to decay. Cities demanded constant care, and if care were not to degenerate into mere conservatorship, it had to be borne on by necessities which would appear absolute in the eyes of contemporaries, especially of the leading personalities among them.

Trains of thought of this kind are open to misunderstanding and misinterpretation from two sides. On one hand I refer to those modern ideologies that judge a building or the general structure of a city according to the value of the political system, in the service of which—indeed for the security of which—both came into being. In this case the standards of judgment are generally derived from one's own political attitudes. We are experiencing the revival of faith in world history as world judgment. Monumental architectural structures, in the eyes of such critics, disguise social injustice that was caused, in part at least, by their very construction. Judgments of what was achieved in other ages are made according to what we see as the failures of those ages. Here we shall attempt to replace judgments with a more precise understanding.

On the other hand we find exactly the opposite point of view. This view isolates buildings, spaces, and compositions of streets into the timeless realm of aesthetic experience. The attempt is made to develop guidelines for future urban planning on the basis of formal results that were successful in the past. From Camillo Sitte (1889) to A. E. Brinckmann (1920) and P. Lavedan (1926), it was believed possible to determine the rules of form to which successful urban planning has always owed its success. As late as 1959, Paul Zucker managed to elevate similar questions to a higher level of consciousness. But even the beguiling corrections that Sitte proposes for
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the design of the Ringstrasse in Vienna seem to obscure precisely those characteristics which, both originally and still today, tie that masterpiece of urban planning to its own time (see chap. 7).

The reading of a series of historical city plans was made easier for me by the drawings of Edmund N. Bacon in Design of Cities (New York, 1967). Bacon illustrates highly successful towns from all ages. He compares his graphic depictions—and achieves detachment in the process—with the rhythmic figures and symbols of motion in Paul Klee’s urban abstractions. Correspondences confirm for him the effective possibilities of immutable formal relationships, which he has tried to revive in his own area of activity—plans for greater metropolitan Philadelphia. We do not have to condemn, with Jane Jacobs, the two-dimensionality of research into modern urban planning as inappropriate to today’s situation in order to reject such simplifications. Cities can no more be understood by means of aesthetic norms alone than by means of standards borrowed from sociology and political science.

History tries to encompass overlapping processes. It has to take every aspect of life into consideration. Cities can be understood neither from their beginnings alone nor from their final state. Nor is it possible to make a case in terms of the visual manifestations generated in successful cities by an auspicious process of development. Yet the mind cannot demand more of itself than simple understanding.

Art history looks more deeply than history in general, for the sources of art history are the thing itself; the buildings, the townscape that still exists, constitute the historical event. Old views of a town complete our knowledge by making past circumstances visible to us. What is handed down to us visually teaches us with greater precision about the genesis of buildings, their aesthetic, ideological, and semantic rank.

Among art-historical objects, cities and particular monumental groupings assume a special position insofar as stylistic stages and phases are surveyed in them. Only ideal cities were supposed to be built in a single style. Living cities have always renewed themselves. Every epoch of their history became architecture. They are enriched, torn down, extended, reinterpreted. There is constant rebuilding. Everything we can learn about this process from secondary sources has to be confirmed by visual examination, which is the more exact truth.

In the process, the whole and its parts mutually interpret themselves—the totality of the city, every building in it, as well as every ornament, every statue, every picture. Cities do not merely report their history. By the forms
that served for their physical manifestation, cities provide the motives for the building of every house and every street. Written sources may contribute information; as far as art-historical research is concerned, they become tags which promise to take some of the work out of looking; but no other source can inform us as well as the building itself. No other historical process instructs us in the same totally undueful manner. We are present as eyewitnesses. Suppositions, obstacles, goals, and ideas are all visible to us. The architects prove to be interpreters of the building patrons' intentions. The changing forms by which existence is mastered stand side by side with the stylistic phases that follow one another to form a particular composition. We are received by the past whenever we set foot in an old city square, and at the same time we are taught about a past that never denies its ideals in the face of the present. In the squares of Rome, Florence, or Venice, in the great axes of St. Petersburg, Berlin, or Paris, in the medieval regularity of Siena, Bern, or Lübeck, among those baroque vistas—which seem larger than they are—in Salzburg, Turin, and Prague, the desire to understand knows no bounds and searches for communicating forms.

No one individual can satisfy this desire for understanding in every direction. For every question expands the scope. We can never pursue more than a few. Research finds it necessary to do art—in the fullness of its being—an injustice by paying attention only to those parts of the whole phenomenon that respond to the specific questions of the research in some particular case. In the following text these questions will lead us through several disciplines—history and art history, sociology and political science, town planning and semantics—but they will always pursue the one basic question that is addressed in the subtitle of this book. It is a question that opens our eyes to consummate form.
In almost every century and in most European nations, a surprising number of cities have survived that were originally planned to fulfill a specific political, military, economic, or even pedagogic function but lost their raison d'être as soon as there was no longer any need for that function. They were not planned with an eye to continuous development. Historical progress was not taken into account. Planning had to be completed before construction began. Thus they atrophied, decayed, or simply went to seed if the ensuing centuries did not give them another task to perform. Many had already lost their purpose even before completion.

I shall return to this problematic in my final chapter, “The Unplannable.” Whatever is planned and designed at a certain point in time bears the essential characteristics of that time and at the same time loses its topicality. Every ideal city is the product of its moment and cannot develop with the changing course of history.

All these cities were designed from without by a superior power rather than developing from within. Their form was superimposed upon them. As I have stressed, to distinguish between the city that has grown and “become,” on the one hand, and the city as founded and planned, on the other, hardly does justice to historical reality (see Introduction). Yet cities that have been conceived ex-
trinsically, that have been ordained, are less able to survive than those that have developed from within. It is true that many consciously planned foundings have grown into masterpieces of urban design. Bern and Lübeck are examples (see chaps. 2 and 3). However, in these cases it was only the impulse that came from the outside. Princes, as planners of the land, endowed craftsmen and merchants with settlements favored by the security of their location and the ease of communication. All later building was left to the citizens. Reason and foresight had determined the sites, economic successes promoted growth, and political self-consciousness added monumental accents to the urban complex. Many Greek colonial cities around the Mediterranean and, later, member cities of the Hanseatic League around the Baltic developed in this way. The purpose for which they were built proclaimed itself in the course of history. A process of enrichment bore testimony to the soundness of the initial conception.

No ideal city had comparable success. Pienza is the best-known example among those which were at least started (fig. 75). The fine city square with its cathedral, bishop's palace, city hall, and papal palace was still incomplete when Pope Pius II, who had commissioned it, died in 1463. Even a pope could not ensure the continued existence of his birthplace. Building went on, but the square never took on a life of its own. Art historians have pointed to it as the cradle of Renaissance urban design. It does provide a landmark in architectural history. In a history of cities it would have to count as an investment that failed—a square in the middle of a village, so laid out that the most magnificent panorama opens up to it, from the very beginning an object designed to be preserved.

The term "superimposed form"—a concept invented by Wilhelm Pinder for other purposes—can be illustrated by plans of mannerist cities. Freudenstadt in the Black Forest is an example. Heinrich Schickard was
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commissioned by Duke Friedrich of Württemberg to build a city in the shape of the board game of Mühle for the miners in the Christophtal silver mine. The commission grew out of an idea that occurred to the prince while he was playing the game and can scarcely have been intended any more seriously or profoundly than that. The board on which this game is played served as the plan of the city; the parish church and the city hall—contrary to all tradition—had to be placed at the opposite corners of a square site. A castle, which was never begun, was to be built in the empty space at the center of the board. The miners’ houses framed the course of the game. They were inhabited only as long as the mines remained productive. The second heyday of the town, as a spa in the 20th century, was predicated upon the organic extension of the board into the hills and valleys outside the town. The original manneristic plan became the kernel of the city, which is now surrounded by formless new construction. As an architectural event, this city has never been more than a curiosity, and such beautifi-

Figure 75. Pienza: Piazza Piccolomini
cation as has been achieved is owed entirely to the hills of the Black Forest.

Research into urban design has paid increased attention to the human game of “ideal city”—a game played by philosophers from Plato to Thomas More to Ebenezer Howard, by architectural rhetoricians and builders from Filarete and Alberti to LeCorbusier, and by princes and pedagogues from the 15th century onward. Anyone could join in the game, leaving things to be completed later. The many works on urban planning in the Renaissance and the baroque period also belong to this realm, as does the modern interest in the canons of revolutionary architecture. Insofar as these plans are also intended to serve a pedagogical end—the creation of the ideal state—we can speak of urban utopias. Thomas More, in 1516, used “Utopia” as the title for his book, which first appeared in Leyden. He describes a state with fifty-four cities, all built according to an identical plan, whose inhabitants were all to be educated as true Christians with a prescribed order of living. These projects had nothing to do with historical reality. We are dealing here with one of those humanist, Platonic conversational themes by means of which people distanced themselves from contemporary problems so as to be able to establish irrevocable laws. In the nature of things, there were remarkable intermediate stages along the road leading from the founding of cities, which could be realized, to ideal cities and architectural utopias, which could not.

Aigues-Mortes and Richelieu

A characteristic example of a city that was built for a temporary purpose and later fell into decay is Aigues-Mortes (fig. 76). King Louis the Holy (1226–72) began negotiations in 1240 to acquire a site with a canal and a harbor on which he could build a fortified city for mustering his armies and dispatching them to the Crusades. As is well known, an initial expedition in 1248 failed, as did the more ambitious one in 1270. The king died before the fortifications were even begun. His successor, Philip the Brave (from 1272 on), and Philip the Fair (after 1289) took up the idea. The latter finally succeeded in completing the square wall with its five gates and four towers, one at each corner, with a whole series of towers as reinforcement. In the interior, the street grid was filled up with dwelling houses. There was a market and a church. Aside from agriculture, however, it was only construction that sustained the town. The moment the royal subventions ceased to be paid, the community was bound to decay. The original reason for the founding of the town, the Crusades, no longer existed.
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Figure 76. Aigues-Mortes

We now move ahead several centuries, but we remain in France. The town of Richelieu is constantly put forward as a masterpiece of urban planning, a forerunner of Versailles. In a history of urban studies considered as political science, Richelieu would have to be cited as a planning failure. Its builder did not reckon with the transcendental nature of the power constellation he had built up, and even less with conditions after his death.

At the height of his success he was forced to recollect the trauma of his youth, which was spent in the direst oppression and danger at his family’s ancestral castle halfway between Tours and Poitiers—not far from the site of the present-day town of Richelieu. As Louis XIII’s chief minister, he was able to recover the property in 1621 and to add to it by further purchases. Ten years later, the properties were combined to create a dukedom. At that time, in 1631, his architect, Jacques le Mercier, drew up plans for a large modern castle, an extensive park, and, in the righthand corner, the town. The whole thing was a complex of about 500 by 700 meters, with a regular network of streets, precisely delimited by a wall. An academy was founded and a church built, provision was made for a handsome town
square, and the officials of the small court were given modest city palaces. Dwellings were built according to a uniform plan—those on the main streets that led from one gate to another were to have a second story as well as an attic; those on the side-streets were to have an attic only. The whole project was able to be completed by 1642, the year of Richelieu’s death, and remained famous. La Fontaine called it the most beautiful village in the world, remarking that its one fault was a lack of inhabitants. The court had been dissolved on the death of the cardinal, as the family lacked the means to keep the complex going. The castle was torn down during the French Revolution. The statesman who had secured France’s whole future could not resist the charms of playing with a plan, which, once developed, was already a failure. The works of art that had been collected in the castle went with the people, among them Michelangelo’s Slaves, now in the Louvre.

Terre Murate or Bastides

The high and the late Middle Ages built cities all over Europe according to regular models, which either served to defend the land owned by a city-state or a principedom, or were intended to bring in revenues from taxation. Tuscan documents of the 14th century speak of terre murate. 4

The city-states of Florence, Siena, Pisa, Lucca, and Arezzo both founded and completed small towns of this kind. Monteriggioni on the borders of Siena’s possessions became the most famous, for the simple reason that Dante compared its towers to the giants that loom up above the circle of a central pit in hell. The town was soon depopulated. The characteristic of these places is their regular ground plan. Most of them were built according to a uniform plan with funds from the mother city. Their own resources were never sufficient to permit an extension of their limits, however favorable individual economic circumstances might turn out to be. San Giovanni Val d’Arno, the plan of which is ascribed to Arnolfo di Cambio, and La Scarperia are among the most perfectly executed (figs. 77 and 78). In both, the palace of the podestà, who was appointed by the mother city, gives us a hint as to the circumstances in which the government found itself. The Palazzo Vecchio was imitated, but on a smaller scale. Here, as in many comparable examples, the cities were to help break the power of the barons who ruled the country—the Pazzi (among others) in San Giovanni, and primarily the Ubaldini in La Scarperia. This aim was accomplished even before the walls were finished. Later, there was no incentive to change the monumental plan of the piazza in the town center. The area already settled,
Figure 77. San Giovanni Val d'Arno, as it stands today after the removal of the walls

Figure 78. La Scarperia, as it stands today
surrounded by the walls, could not be filled until the Habsburg's agrarian reforms in the 18th and 19th centuries, and the town could not be extended until the Industrial Revolution. Before the Industrial Revolution the citizens never had an opportunity to exercise personal initiative. If we disregard the pillage and destruction that later wars visited on cities like this, there is only one date in their history—that of their founding.

There are some countervailing examples: Nicola, a small town near Carrara, is one suggested by Piero Pierotti (1972). Although it has shown no development for centuries, it came into existence from its citizens' own initiatives.\textsuperscript{5} The purpose for which the town was created ensured that it would always be an active organism from the inside out (fig. 79). Nicola has been preserved intact. Its extent and the layout of its streets have remained constant. The houses and churches have always been built on the same foundations as epoch succeeded epoch. Originally, a community of farmers had settled on the summit of a steep hill, not because they feared pirates or highwaymen—the town is not fortified—nor because they were afraid of malaria. It was recognized that the shortest routes to the fields that lay around the hills met at this summit. The convenience of the site outweighed the fact that there was no natural water supply on this summit and no through traffic. The idea proved so tenable that the small community was able to exist without any help from the outside.

Compared with cities established to protect rural areas, those cities founded by princes or bishops for fiscal reasons—especially in France and
England and, in isolated cases, Germany—have achieved considerable significance. Such cities include those built by the Zähringens—Freiburg-im-Breisgau, Bern (fig. 36), and Freiburg-im-Üchtland. The industry of the citizens was supposed to increase revenue from taxation. Thus, economic historians have paid as much attention to these cities as legal historians have done to the new merchant settlements in eastern Germany. A pioneer work in this field is Maurice Beresford’s study of the founding of medieval cities in England, Wales, and those provinces of France which for a time were subject to the English crown. They are bastides, “cities as building developments” in the modern sense.

Beresford considers only those places where planned construction immediately followed their founding. The reason for founding these towns was, in all cases, a landowner’s wish to increase the earnings of his estates. Only a few of these towns, in France and on England’s Scottish border, functioned to defend their country or to keep the landowner’s possessions secure. Their external form does not differ from the Tuscan terre murate. Beaumont de Périgord may serve as one example (among many) for France (fig. 80). It was founded by Edward I’s seneschal in 1272, the year he returned from the crusades, and remained famous both for its location and
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for the care taken in its construction. It developed no further. A picture of Flint, in Wales, done in the year 1610, clarifies the lack of success of such undertakings. This town was also founded and built by Edward I, five years after Beaumont in 1277. It could, at best, be described as a fortified village in front of the castle.7 In England alone, between 950 and 1345, no less than 171 towns were founded with similar objectives. After the plague of 1348, only one straggler remained in 1368, and a quarter of a millennium went by before a new attempt was made with the founding of Falmouth in 1616. The idea simply had little success. Earnings were not forthcoming. Without outside subventions, these towns could scarcely exist. In any case they did not develop. It is significant that in Gutkind’s choice of twenty-four of them for a history of urban planning, out of a total of 173 he could include only three that approached prosperity through functions which, though almost ignored at the outset, became their major ones.8 These are the cathedral city of Durham; Newcastle-upon-Tyne, whose value as a defensive center near the Scottish border and its coal-exporting trade ensured its continued existence; and, finally, the port of Liverpool. Fiscal impositions, the landowner’s insistence on profiting from the earnings of the townspeople’s industry, paralyzed the entrepreneurial spirit. The towns remained sterile. For such vessels to be refloated would have required political charters or special privileges. Every success merely led to higher taxes. Nowhere do we find a stimulus to erect monumental buildings, which would have emphasized the taxable income even more.

These bastides illustrate a basic law: whatever is born of subvention needs continual subvention or new liberties if it is to develop further. The fiscal projections were never met. The only aesthetic element history has added to what was achieved in the initial planning is that which symbolizes the ancient and the idyllic, which lends value to what little there is to preserve.

Star-shaped Fortifications of the Baroque

The same is true of the many fortresses and fortified cities of the baroque period. From the beginning of the 16th century to the middle of the 18th and beyond, absolutism tried to secure borders that were threatened and areas newly conquered. The theory of defense that brought these complexes into being was known equally well to antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the modern era. Landholdings were protected by castles or cities whose inhabitants, supported and watched over by garrisons, were themselves to assume
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the burden of defense. The planning of such towns was a favorite occupation of all authors of military architecture handbooks from Filarete's ideal city, Sforzinda, in the mid-15th century, to the grandiose plans of the marquis de Vauban (1633–1707). Vauban's last work, Neubreisach, is one of the best-preserved examples (fig. 81). Most plans for such towns begin with the circle as the basic form, with a star-shaped circle of bastions and moats surrounding it. The circular form permits roads to traverse the shortest distance from the command post at the center to the fort at the periphery. The basic idea was that each military order should correspond to a geometric one, so that aesthetic clarity would serve the effectiveness of the fortifications. The idea proved itself in those cases where towns were planned merely as garrisons and had to be sustained only as long as the political situation demanded. Gustavsburg, across from Mainz between the Rhine and the Main, provides an example. It was founded by the Swedish military. The idea also proved itself where a flourishing, free commercial city—like Bremen, Hamburg, or Lübeck—was still wealthy enough in the 17th and 18th centuries to protect itself by a circle of bastions and moats (fig. 47). But wherever plans had provided for the development of a free citizenry, side by side with the garrison, the citizens would ultimately have had to
bear the brunt of the whole organization. It was precisely when subventions for the garrison and fortifications were discontinued that everything started to collapse.

Palmanova, planned for the protection of the Venetian rural area against attacks from the Ottoman Empire, is an example as significant as it is famous (fig. 82). Venice sought to build itself a "protective city" whose inhabitants were to sustain themselves by trade, crafts, or agriculture. Yet not a single inhabitant moved into this model city of his own accord. In 1622, the Serenissima ordered criminals to be pardoned and offered building sites and materials if they were willing to settle along the streets that had already been laid out. Yet even the prisoners did not move voluntarily. Today, the life of this small town is still determined by the military. Even where the political and military conditions for such rural fortresses were present, their success was limited to the period during which those conditions held good. A frequently cited example is that circle of towns with which, after 1542, the Spanish Habsburgs tried to secure the Netherlands against France. Marienburg, named after Maria of Hungary, the sister of Charles V, was the first. In 1545, Ville-Franche-sur-Meuse was established, and nine years later, in 1554, Philippeville, named for Philip II. Charlesville also belongs to this group. We are dealing here exclusively with central complexes which were organized entirely to suit the needs of the garrison. In the middle was a square with the town fountain and, frequently, the gallows and pillory, and streets led from this square radially to five or more
In the new fortifications built in the reign of Louis XV (fig. 83), everything was designed to ensure that the defending troops could reach the fortifications in the shortest possible time. Anyone at all familiar with army discipline in the 16th to 18th centuries, when troops were supposed to fear their officers more than they did the enemy, knows that life in these garrisons was like living in prison. If such fortified towns ever became urban communities, it was only after the bastions had fallen and the reasons for their construction had ceased to exist.

The lethargy resulting from lack of freedom also spread to previously free organisms after they were incorporated into a larger territorial state and then designated as garrison towns. Magdeburg is characteristic of such towns. The medieval town was destroyed when it was conquered by Tilly in 1631. Of the 2,000 houses, 1,700 burned down, among them all the public buildings and all the churches, with the exception of the cathedral and the convent of the Blessed Virgin. Of the approximately 35,000 inhabitants, only 2,600 were still living in the city in 1638. The council architect, and later burgomaster, Otto von Gericke (1606–86), presented a bold plan for
reconstruction. In 1648, however, the city was made part of Brandenburg-Prussia. The Great Elector dismissed the last city administrator in 1666. Immediately afterward, Magdeburg was developed into the strongest fortified city in Prussia. Civil servants and officers built houses in the classical style on the old streets. A few merchants, whose prosperity derived from supplying the army, built larger palaces. The “Old Dessauer,” Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Dessau, governor of the city and fortress from 1702 to 1742, promoted the extension of the carefully regulated street plan. The royal palace was built on the cathedral square as were the arsenal and the palace of the fortress architect and other officers. The largest baroque building in Magdeburg, the old Packhof, was a warehouse and storehouse. Other cathedral cities that had been destroyed were able to rebuild testimonies to their own existence, but Magdeburg was forced to become a fortress complex and was burdened with disciplinary orders. The layout of the city became a mirror of the army’s discipline, its asceticism, its monotony, and its lack of freedom. Life consisted of nothing but service; architects built only according to rule. In the process, much was built that was pleasant, well proportioned, clearly defined, and cleanly constructed—the exteriors of the houses resembled the smart uniforms of the cuirassiers.

Calais and Valletta

Within the framework of this chapter, two towns should be mentioned that were built for temporary functions but maintained their importance, and thus their appearance, for a much longer period: the baroque town of Valletta, exemplary from its founding until the present day, and medieval Calais, for the whole period of English rule, 1347–1558. Extraordinary political circumstances made both of them possible.

The first thing that Edward III did after his unprecedented victory over the French-Burgundian cavalry at Crecy in 1347 was to occupy Calais, which, unprepared as it was, he was able to starve into submission in a matter of months. The city already had the shape and function of a fortress city (fig. 84)—a rectangle with a fortress in the northwest part of the city and a regular street grid. It was protected on the sea side by a sandbank and on the land side by walls and moats as well as extensive lowlands which could be flooded at any time. There were only four gates, two on the sea side (3 and 4) and two on the land side (5 and 6). The roads leading to these land gates were protected by the English kings, in the course of time, by a series of castles, for Calais developed into the “jewel” of the English crown.
and, finally, into the last stronghold of her continental possessions and a guarantee of her hope of reconquest. For this reason, the citadel (1) had to be reinforced, at great expense, and a second sea fortification, for the protection of the harbor (2), had to be built. The fortifications cost so much because the town lacked any sort of building material, except clay for bricks. Wood, stones, limestone and metal had, for the most part, all to be brought by ship from England. Walls and fortified gates had to be kept in the best repair at all times so that the final defensive measure—the flooding of the lowlands—would have to be taken as rarely as possible. Through almost unimaginable lethargy, that measure was not taken in 1558 when the duc de Guise reconquered the town for France.

The old French stronghold had lived by trading and seafaring. The patron saints of the two parish churches, St. Nicholas (16) and Our Lady (17) bear witness to the citizens’ self-perception as a seafaring and burgher community. A large marketplace with a town hall (14) and a warehouse (13) formed the center of the town.

The buildings erected by order of the English crown indicate that for all practical purposes the whole western half of the city was reserved for the occupying power. There, in the shadow of the castle, a series of large buildings arose, forming the basis for the extension of the fortifications; first came the treasurer’s palace opposite the church of St. Nicholas, followed by another building for lead smelting, storage chambers, the royal arsenal, the royal bakery, a weighbridge for the royal administration, a carpenter’s workshop and wood storage area, and the office of the chief mason.

We can distinguish four main periods in the history of Calais. During the first, 1347–85, the victorious English armies brought in enough loot to enlarge the town in a magnificent fashion. The second period brought reverses and ever greater losses of land until finally Calais itself was almost
the only possession left on the Continent. At the same time, the administration, the treasury, and the building administration fell into corrupt hands. Larger and larger sums were demanded for the maintenance of the fortifications, for protective dikes, and for keeping order in the streets. Smaller and smaller sums served the purposes for which they were intended. Storm tides accompanied the military defeats. In the third period, 1422—65, more money was spent on Calais than on any other royal undertaking—and less was achieved. It is in the nature of things that an attempt should have been made to rectify these defects by means of a strict, rigid administration, aided by a bureaucracy trained in England. Once again, however, it was shown that no bureaucracy, however well trained, could reverse wrong-headed political decisions and faulty development. The collapse of Calais continued.

Finally, in 1466, the council of merchants was entrusted with administering construction. The council had already been granted, in 1363, the right to erect an office and a warehouse for the import of wool from and the export of cloth to England. The city’s natural sources of income grew with these new rights and obligations. From 1466 until the reconquest in 1558, the community blossomed. Money was earned that could be used to reinforce the fortifications. Within the political and architectural framework outlined, the town grew into a important harbor. Correct economic decision making allowed the stronghold to continue to exist for another ninety years, and it was strategic indecision that was to bring about its fall. The importers and exporters had the greater advantages from belonging to England. Old views and a few remains of the original buildings confirm that this port knew how to approximate to the architectural and living style of the Flemish trading towns.

The harbor remained intact, but the fortifications were rendered unnecessary by the reconquest. Except for a few towers, the fortification material was used in the 17th century for civil buildings. Later, the harbor basin was extended and the industrial suburb of St. Pierre was incorporated into the old town—the whole once again being surrounded by a far-flung circle of fortifications. In the modern city it is difficult to make out the original street plan around the town hall and Notre-Dame.

Calais was a harbor stronghold which, because of its capture, came into the possession of foreigners and was expanded by them into a powerful urban stronghold. Valetta was built after a massive attack by the Ottoman fleets had been warded off from the island stronghold of Malta and at the mo-