The foundation, planning and building of new towns in the 13th and 14th centuries in Europe: an architectural-historical research into urban form and its creation
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INTRODUCTION

This study deals with the creation of new towns in Europe in the 13th and 14th centuries. In the present introductory chapter it is described why this is a relevant historical subject, and why it is worthwhile to study this subject further than has been done so far by other scholars. Also, the objects and the layout of this study will be described, the general sources of information will be indicated, and some important general definitions will be formulated. But first, the general historical situation relevant for urbanisation in the period will be briefly depicted.

0.1 Cultural change in Europe in the 11th to 14th centuries

The structure of settlement in Europe, as it presently exists, was primarily created in the period from about the 11th to the 14th century. It was at that time that the European landscape changed dramatically when the land, which until then had been largely uncultivated, was brought under the plough. Vast areas of primeval woodland were cleared, fens and marshes were reclaimed, and new agricultural field-structures were laid out in their place. In the lands that were thus cultivated, new villages and towns were created and new roads were laid out to connect them. By this process, the structure of the European landscape gradually became more artificial, more ordered and more ‘detailed’. Along with this, a territorial hierarchy of settlements came about, which was to determine a considerable part of the economic, social, administrative and political structures in the centuries to follow.

The number of settlements that were newly created was especially high during the 13th and first half of the 14th century. It would be several centuries - until the industrial revolution - before the structure of settlement, and thereby the landscape, would again undergo such great alterations as were seen in this period. (figs. 0.1, 0.2)

But it was not just the geographical structure that changed so significantly in the 11th to 14th centuries. This development was only part of a greater process of change which thoroughly affected European culture into its most remote corners, and which would have a considerable influence on human life in that part of the world up to the present day. This process involved many elements. To name the most important: trade increased, was regulated, and money became its main medium of exchange; a fiscally organised taxation system was introduced; agricultural production grew and was increasingly intended for the market; settlement became more concentrated in villages, towns and cities; people gained increasing freedom, and political structures gradually became more stable and centralised. These aspects of (re-)structuralisation of an economical, geographical and political nature had their rational counterparts in, among other things, the canonisation of law, natural philosophy, and increasing literacy and quantification. All these elements, along with many others of less general importance, influenced one another and largely came about in a context of mutual stimulation. This complex of developments gradually transformed and (re-)structured society, the physical environment and the intellectual atmosphere throughout western, central, and southern Europe.

At the same time, this culture expanded: arable land cultivation, the international money-based economy of trade, and the concentration of settlement in villages and towns expanded into Scandinavia, the northern and western parts of the British Isles, eastern Europe and the Iberian peninsula. Many of these outlying areas were colonised under the pretext of spreading Christianity. Instead of nobles and clerics, civilians - especially traders, but also artists, schoolmen and administrators - came to play an ever bigger role in international European culture. Later on, this process moved on to other parts of the world, and certain aspects of it are still active at this very moment.

The clearest visible reflections of this complex of developments are the towns and cities that were created, which have proven to be very durable artefacts. Therefore, they serve as a rich source of information on the cultural history of Europe.

1 See for instance Dijksterhuis 1977, pp.116-144; Crosby 1997.
The growing number, size and wealth of the towns and cities, and the competition between them, resulted in the creation of the greatest artistic monuments of the era. In the urban settlements great churches and cathedrals, massive town walls, impressive town halls, sumptuous guild halls and luxurious private houses were built. These grand monuments have been dealt with extensively in architectural historiography. Therefore, they are not what this study is about: it is about the town itself. The town is just as much a work of art as are its main architectural monuments, since it was conceived no less purposefully and its creation has not been less complicated, given the fact that there are more different aspects to it that have societal implications in one way or another.

0.1.1 New town foundation

It is a well-known fact that the period of about the 11th to the 14th century saw the flowering of urban culture in Europe. Actually, this was the second period of grand-scale urbanisation in Europe, after the period of classical antiquity. Following an intermediate period of strong regression of urban culture, many new towns ‘sprang up’, as it is often termed. In the Mediterranean region, especially in Italy, there were towns that had never completely ceased to function, and which revived again from the 11th century onward. Elsewhere in the former empire, the places where remnants of Roman towns had survived in some kind of form were more likely focal points for urbanisation than were the places without remnants of earlier urban settlements. But still, many towns were created in places that never had been settled by the Romans.³

The pre-conditions for this revival of urban settlement were population growth and a surplus of agricultural produce, which made it possible for people to specialise their activities in professions other than those concerned with the production of victuals. Although this specialisation in non-agricultural professions favours the nucleation of settlement, it does not automatically result in the creation of towns: the vast number of the many new towns - and this is too often disregarded - did not just appear like wild flowers in the field, but were deliberately planted. And in many cases they were not just planted as small seeds, but

rather as adolescent structures, being supplied with the necessary attributes needed to function healthily.

It is obvious to see from the number of town foundations, that especially from the 12th to the 14th century more and more landlords, great and small, lay as well as clerical, got convinced of the idea that the franchising of nucleated settlements could be an effective instrument for the expansion and consolidation of their power. Paradoxically, landlords could enlarge their power and income by granting special freedoms of economic, fiscal and juridical nature to their subjects. This enfranchisement could be granted to existing rural settlements; but often, and in increasing numbers, it also was granted to settlements that were newly created. Sometimes they were completely new creations, from tabula rasa one might say; but mostly the new towns were attached to some kind of existing settlement-core, like a hamlet, a monastery or a castle.

The procedure for the creation of towns seems to have gradually become more standardised. Obviously, the founding lords often made use of previous experiences that had demonstrated to be successful, until gradually a sort of ‘concept’ developed. By the second half of the 13th century or so, this resulted in considerable similarities in new town foundations in most parts of Latin-Christian Europe. It seems that by this time, the creation of towns had become a ‘fashionable’ political activity, which was considered profitable for the landlords as well as for the settlers, who eventually were to become burgheers.

Many of the towns that had been newly founded in the 12th century became very successful cities in the 13th century. Examples from various countries are Cardiff, Newcastle upon Tyne, (Wyke upon) Hull,

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4 Towns were only very rarely founded by the inhabitants themselves. (see par.8.3.2) In other cases the people may have played a stimulating role. (see par.3.8.5, ch.5, n.65)
Montauban, Bilbao, ‘s-Hertogenbosch, Lübeck, Munich, Bern, Klagenfurt, and Alessandria. It seems likely that specifically such highly successful foundations inspired other lords to found new towns of their own. Most later foundations, however, did not become as successful as the earlier ones. It appears that the earlier towns were often founded on the best locations, which was a great advantage. The later ones suffered much more from competition, not only from the older ones, which usually were better equipped, but also from the many other towns that were founded in the same period. In general, one might say that it became more difficult for a town to become successful the later it was founded, particularly from about the middle of the 13th century onwards. By this time the urban system had generally become dense enough to function well. Hence, many of the later foundations failed in attracting sufficient economic activity to become successful. And from about 1300 on, it also became more difficult to attract settlers, as the population growth was diminishing. Eventually, many newly founded towns failed completely for lack of settlers or lack of economic development. Only in the parts of Europe where the process of urbanisation had started relatively late, like in The Netherlands, Greater and Lesser Poland, Prussia, Lithuania and Ukraine, was the period of town foundation still not at its end, or even still in its infancy, in the 14th century.

The fact that many towns were wilfully planned in the period of about the 11th to 14th centuries is not very well-known. In English and German speaking countries the subject of new town planning received growing scholarly interest during the 20th century, while in other countries it has only been aroused since about 1970. But, in general, ‘the renaissance’ is still taken as the period in which town planning was ‘re-invented’. Hence, the period of the 11th to 14th centuries is somewhat marginalised in the discourse on town building in history: it is often interpreted as a sort of interlude on the way to modernity, being part of ‘the middle ages’.

0.1.2 Conditions that made possible the revival of urban culture

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the preconditions for the new ‘boom’ of urban culture were a growing production of foodstuff and an accretion of the population. The first was realised in agriculture by technical innovations in tools and techniques, which has often been called ‘the (second) agrarian revolution’, and by an enormous increase in the amount of arable land, partly thanks to the new techniques. Probably the growth in production was also made possible by a changing, more favourable, climate.

Among the crops, cereals formed an increasing part, as they became more appreciated as part of the general human diet. This process is called ‘cerealisation’. The new agriculture, together with the new diet that was its product, was more economic in a biological as well as a social sense and enabled an increase in the population.

From about the 11th to the 14th century, the growth of the European population was very pronounced, only to be equalled again in the period since the industrial revolution. Encouraged by the cessation of the Viking and Magyar raids and by an improving climate, people ventured widely to reclaim and colonise new lands and to found new villages and towns. This expansion and growth in produce stimulated population growth and vice versa. By 1300, about a quarter of the people lived in towns and cities in the most densely populated areas, Flanders and northern Italy. Venice and Milan were among the largest cities with about 180,000 inhabitants, while Florence had about 120,000. In the 14th century population growth was halted and converted into a general

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8 For instance in The Netherlands the amount of planning in town creation in the period is still much contested among scholars and it is almost completely unknown to the general public. (see for example: Steegh 1988, pp.140-141; Blockmans & Hoppenbrouwers 2002, p.270) It seems that this is partly due to the fact that many scholars believe that the initiative for the creation of towns largely lay with the people who lived on the site, instead of with a landlord. And with this, the idea of ‘organic growth’ appears to be preferred above central planning. (see, for instance, with regard to Beverwijk: Alders, Kruisheer, Schweitzer & Van Venetien 1998, pp.37-43-49)
9 Pierotti 1983, p.104; Blair 2000, p.258. In the German speaking countries, though, the idea of the ‘newly planned town’ from the period of the 12th to 14th centuries has already been much contested in the second half of the 20th century. Particularly archaeologists, but also historians, have argued that the towns mostly developed from older settlements, and they often tended to give more attention to the previous settlements and the aspects of development rather than to the aspects of sudden change and planning. On this basis they argued that ‘newly planned towns’ or even ‘planned towns’ hardly existed. It is quite clear though, that this does no justice to the great changes that occurred in the system of settlement in the period under consideration. (Untermann 2004, pp.9-16)
10 Lilley 2004, p.309; see also pars.10.3.1, 11.3.
11 It should be noted, however, that the increase of food-production and population did not necessarily have to result in urbanisation. In the present case it was the acquaintance with urban culture, through the Roman heritage, and the presence of nodes in the form of religious, political, administrative and trading centres that stimulated urbanisation. (cf. Wheatley 1971, pp.268-411)
decrease caused by famines, ravages of war, a large scale economic crisis and, most of all, ‘the black death’.\(^{13}\)

The ‘agricultural revolution’ had its counterpart in commerce and crafts, where developments took place that have been called a ‘commercial revolution’.\(^{14}\) Specialisation and the organisation of the division of labour, the growth of international trade and the accumulation of capital contributed to an enormous growth of the European economy.\(^{15}\) These developments were particularly centred on urban settlements, the centres of which, in turn, were the markets, where producers, traders and consumers came together. It was not only in an economic and social sense that the society became more and more focused on the market: in a spatial sense there was a similar development, because in a growing number of towns and cities life actually revolved around the market place.\(^{16}\)

At the same time, there was a development towards mechanisation in industry, based on water- and wind-driven machinery, which also must have been of considerable importance for the growth of the economy. This mechanisation has even been called the ‘medieval industrial revolution’.\(^{17}\)

What must have been one of the most important preconditions for urbanisation, though, was a certain degree of political stability. Without political stability, no significant organisation could take place, no reliable economic system could be formed, no safety for possessions or investment would be guaranteed, money would not be reliable as a medium of exchange, no supply of foodstuff would be guaranteed in urban centres, and privileges granted to communities or individuals could not be counted upon. In short: the ‘commercial revolution’ and, to a lesser degree, the ‘agricultural revolution’, could not have taken place without a certain amount of stability and safety guaranteed by supreme powers.

This stability was, of course, only relative. Compared to the situation in present-day Western society, or the Chinese empire in the past two millennia or so, the stability was rather limited. While in China a very large area had become a sort of natural core of the empire, which was mostly ruled by dynasties of emperors that lasted for many generations, in Europe there were many different and rather unstable authorities with small territories that often had no clearly fixed boundaries. Also, many privileges and possessions were not clearly laid down in regulations or documents, which caused much discord. Nevertheless, it was enough to give people, especially farmers, craftsmen, merchants and landlords, the confidence to engage in trade and production for the market, to invest capital, to found towns or to settle in them.

0.1.3 Inward and outward colonisation

The accretion of the population in southern, central and western Europe, as well as the strong economic growth and the technological progress, resulted in the expansion of the culture of this area. There was an inward expansion, or rather colonisation, through intensification of settlement and land use and through an intensification of the economy by the growth of the sectors of agricultural and non-agricultural produce, services and trade. But at the same time there also was an outward expansion, going in all directions: Wales, Ireland and Scotland (c. 11th-16th centuries), Scandinavia (c. 11th-17th), the Iberian peninsula (c. 10th-15th), the eastern Mediterranean, especially the ‘Holy Land’ (late 11th-late 13th), and central-eastern Europe (c. 10th-17th). In this process, newly founded towns played a major role. Apart from the western colonisation on the British isles, the outward colonisation was largely inspired by, or masked under the idealist cover of, the mission of the Christian faith. In fact, between about 950 and 1350 the area which was officially under ‘Rome’ was doubled.\(^{18}\) But there is no doubt that the aspects of adventure, relative overpopulation, search for expansion of dominions and, probably most important, the innate need for economic expansion, also played significant roles as motives for this colonisation.

This outward colonisation did not necessarily take place by political and military aggression. Especially in central-eastern Europe and Scandinavia, many native rulers, after being converted to Christianity, actually welcomed the new economy and culture that was brought by new settlers from the west and south. These

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\(^{13}\) Chant & Goodman 1999, p.141. Estimates of the European population and its growth vary considerably, as sources are scarce and hard to interpret. The most drastic numbers are 25 million around the year 800 and 100 million by 1200. (Chant & Goodman 1999, p.141) Other estimates are 45 million in the early 9th century and 86 million around 1200 (Pounds 1990, p.121), respectively 38.5 million in 1000, 73.5 million around 1340, and 50 million around 1450. (Russell 1983, pp.13-43; Blockmans 1997, p.77). In England the population is estimated to have quadrupled between the late 11th and early 14th century. (Graham 1988, p.45; Dogheshon & Butlin 1976, pp.87-90)

\(^{14}\) Lopez 1976.

\(^{15}\) Duby 1974; Cipolla 1983, pp.91-230; Erlen 1992, p.55.

\(^{16}\) Lopez 1976, p.86.

\(^{17}\) Chant & Goodman 1999, p.139. This term was used, in 1962, by Lynn White Jr., who propounded the theory that the urban revival was largely caused by technological innovations such as those mentioned above.

\(^{18}\) Bartlett 1993, p.283.
rulers profited considerably from it, as their lands had been largely waste and the economy had been relatively extensive. Some of the lords in question were very active colonisers and town founders. King Přemysl Otakar II of Bohemia and Moravia (1253-1278), his right hand man, Bishop Bruno of Olomouc (1245-1281), and King Casimir III (‘the Great’) of Poland (1333-1370) are even among the greatest town founders and ‘regional developers’ of Europe in this period.

For central-eastern Europe the process has long been regarded as a typically German colonisation (‘der Deutsche Ostkolonisation’), because of the spatial and temporal progress of development from the present western part of Germany in an eastward direction, which has often been falsely understood as evidence of the superiority of German culture and ‘blood’. But in fact more or less the same process took place in other regions throughout Europe, not only those of outward colonisation, but also in more central areas such as Holland, Flanders and southwest France, as has been illustrated by Bartlett and Erlen.

Eventually, the expansion of Europe was halted in the southeast by the counter movement of the Ottoman empire from the 14th century on. But the losses on that front were to be more than compensated by the winning of the extra-European colonies and trading posts overseas from the 15th century on.

0.1.4 New settlements and new economy

As already indicated above, the founding of new towns was mostly linked, in some way, to economic developments. In eastern Europe, the Low Countries and France for instance, towns were often founded in connection to the reclamation and cultivation of land or to the intensification of its use. A town could serve as a place of residence for farmers, but it was also a centre of services and, most important, a place where one could buy and sell products. The fact that products could be sold there ensured the profitability of agricultural production, and thereby guaranteed the value of agricultural land.

An efficient system of markets was needed in order to be able to exploit the agricultural surplus profitably. It was customary that markets – just as well as towns - could only be founded by landlords with that prerogative. It was mostly forbidden to trade outside the established market place and market hours, so that lords could control trade and easily levy the market tolls and rents for stalls. With the growing importance of the money-based trade-economy, more and more weekly markets were founded, by which means a trade network was created that became ever more densely woven. In the 14th century the longest distance from home to market would generally have become about 8-20 km., so that the inhabitants of the countryside would not have to travel too far in order to bring their produce to market and, conversely, markets would not harm each other too much in mutual competition. Sometimes when a new market town was founded, existing markets in the vicinity would be closed down in order to stimulate the new town.

Eventually, the growing agricultural surplus and the increasingly effective system of markets and transportation made it possible for ever more people to live in cities and for cities to become larger and larger.

In the process of colonisation of formerly waste or less intensively used land, villages were also newly created. In some cases there clearly was some sort of territorial planning in which towns and villages played a combined role. When Bishop Wichmann of Magdeburg founded the town of Jüterbog in the Mark Brandenburg in northeastern Germany, it was to become ‘the beginning and head of the province’, and the goal was ‘to...

20 According to Quirin about 120 new towns were founded under Přemysl Ottokar II in the second half of the 13th century: a considerable part by himself, and the rest by others stimulated by his policies. (Quirin 1954, pp.41; see also Hoenisch 1986, pp.89-109; Kuthan 1990) Of King Casimir it was written that he had ‘...[founded] a country of wood and left a country of stone.’ He founded 45 towns and fortified many others. (Gurkind 1972, p.42; according to Kuhn 1977, p.58, however, he would have founded 65 new towns, by which count he would be the greatest town-founder of the period) On bishop Bruno of Olomouc, see Stoob 1977. Other great town founders in the second half of the 13th century were King Edward I of England, (see ch.2 and 3) counts Raymond VII and Alphonse de Poitiers of Toulouse, and the French royal sénéchal Eustache de Beaumarchais (see ch.3). Particularly in the 14th century the Teutonic order was the greatest settlement founder, with 89 towns and about 1,400 villages in Prussia. (Erlen 1992, p.4)
21 This was also an important idea in Nazi ideology. But even after World War II this idea remained popular until about the 1970’s. (Schlesinger 1975, pp.11-31; Erlen 1992, p.1) The influential historian Walter Kuhn, for instance, did not miss an opportunity to use the adjective ‘deutsche’ when writing of colonisation, reclamation, order, trade, law and city foundation in eastern Europe. He even continued to use the term ‘deutsche Lebensraum’, which had become badly contaminated by Nazi ideology. (see Kuhn 1956).
22 Bartlett 1993, pp.107-110; Erlen 1992, pp.1-9, 289. For the historiography of the colonisation of eastern and central Europe, see Schlesinger 1975 and Piskorski 2002. See also par.10.5.1.
23 Fox 1973, pp.89-98; Katzinger 1978, p.93; Bond 1990; see par.5.1.4.
24 This was the case, for instance, with the town of Greifenhagen, which was founded in Pomerania in 1243. Three other settlements were deprived of their market rights in order to promote the new market and the town in which it was held. (Kuhn 1985, p.370)
25 See par.10.2.1; Roberts 1973; Roberts 1987; Chapelot & Fossier 1985; Barends 1988.
build a province', according to the foundation document. Especially in the principalities east of the river Elbe, large areas were colonised systematically, with clearing and reclamation of land, foundation of towns and villages, castles and monasteries, and building of roads going hand in hand.

In this context it is important to be aware of the fact that from about the 6th until the 15th century there was a tendency towards the concentration of rural settlement all over Europe. Dispersed settlement, partly still based on the Roman villa or on clan structures, was slowly replaced by concentrated settlement in agricultural villages that were mostly based on the territorial organisation of the manor or the parish. This process seems to have been related to the ‘feudalisation’ of Europe from the Carolingian period onwards, by which the land was divided into baronial territories and manors.

The process of settlement concentration can be observed in the foundation of new towns of a mainly agricultural character in southwest France, which will be described in chapter 2. There and elsewhere, it is sometimes hard to make a clear distinction between newly founded towns and newly founded villages.

Thus, the foundation of new towns in the period under consideration was part of a larger development of a new culture based on a monetarised trade economy and concentrated settlement, which expanded inward as well as outward, and which must be seen against the background of a rapidly growing population. This process resulted in great mutations that affected the landscape as much as society. It led to relatively important changes between the 10th and 15th centuries, but must not be seen as an isolated, specifically ‘medieval’, phenomenon. It was part of the development of ‘culture’, meaning the increase of the influence of man over nature that has proceeded from the Stone Age up to this very moment. The most clearly visible aspect of this development of ‘culture’ is the artificial ordering of the surface of the earth, and a small facet of this spatial ordering was the creation of new towns in the 13th and 14th centuries.

0.1.5 End of the high-period of town foundation

As already mentioned above, the number of towns that were being founded decreased strongly in the 14th century. In that century the economy stagnated and the population stopped growing as fast as it had previously in western, central and southern Europe. By the middle of the 14th century, the total European population even decreased by about one fifth to one third, due to famines that were the result of bad harvests, and especially due to the ‘black death’. Between 1347 and 1351 a bubonic plague, known as ‘the black death’ or ‘the great plague’, spread from the Crimea over Europe.

Even for the earlier period, when the population and the economy were still growing, it is hardly surprising, with so many new foundations of towns and villages in such a short time, that many of these new creations were not very successful, and some even failed completely. It is only natural that, after things had changed for the worse in the first half of the 14th century, a much higher number of the new foundations failed due to lack of settlers and economic potential. Only in the parts of Europe where the process of urbanisation had started relatively late, was it still to go on for one or two more centuries. On the whole though, there was a deep depression around the middle of the 14th century, which marked the end of the period of great urban expansion.
Most of the towns that were newly founded during the 12th to 14th centuries seem to have been moderately successful, remaining more or less of the same size as they were once planned until the great demographic and economic changes of the 19th and 20th centuries. The towns that grew into major urban centres within, say, two centuries, were mainly founded in the 12th century, or in the 13th century in central-eastern Europe. Despite a newly expanding population and economy from about 1500 on, the number of towns that were newly founded remained relatively low in that period. Beresford even claimed, speaking of England and Wales, that 'from 1320 there were four centuries that could almost be christened the un-urban centuries.' Although few new towns were added to the urban network until the industrial revolution, urbanisation still went on, since ever more people came to live in urban settlements, especially in the larger cities. In the 19th and 20th centuries more new towns were founded or promoted; but still, the enormous growth of the urban population was primarily absorbed by the older towns and cities that experienced a tremendous expansion. Partly, these were the towns that had been newly founded in the period under consideration in this study.

In the following chapters I will generally refer to the period in which the majority of new town plantations occurred, roughly from the 12th to the middle of the 14th century, as the 'high-period of town foundation'.

0.2 Objects, layout and sources of this study

0.2.1 Objects

In the past decades considerable research has been done on towns that were newly planned in the period of about the 11th to 14th centuries. But in comparison to town planning from the 15th century on, the subject is still relatively little studied. And even when new towns of the earlier period are examined, the research is mostly limited in scope to a single town, or sometimes a specific group of towns in a specific region, or the work of a specific founder. Only very rarely have larger groups of newly planned towns of a specific period or of specific countries been the subject of study. Therefore, the intention of this dissertation is to study the subject of new town planning in the broader perspective of the Latin-Christian part of Europe in general, in order to create an overview. The emphasis therein will be on the period of the second half of the 13th and first half of the 14th century, as will be explained below.

This research is qualitative and explorative in character. The main goal of this study is to reconstruct and describe the process of town creation from first conception to actual realisation, primarily in respect to the spatial layout of the project. As there are no clear sources that describe or illustrate this process well, it is necessary to reconstruct it from many different sources. Probably, the process was more or less different for every town; but by combining the material of different new town foundations in different regions of Europe, a description will be made of the creation process as it may generally have been. In the final section, this dissertation will also deal with the 19th- and 20th-century historiography of (new) town planning in the period under consideration, in order to explain why important results of my research do not agree with a number of traditional ideas and theories.

36 See par.0.1.1.
37 For instance: Pilsen, Liblice, Dresden, Wroclaw, Poznań, Kaliningrad (formerly Königsberg), Riga, Novo Mesto (Slovenia).
38 See fgs.0.1, 0.2; De Vries 1984 (esp. p.255).
39 Beresford 1967, p.308.
40 See De Vries 1984, table 3.7. According to De Vries, the urban percentage of the total population in Europe grew from 5.6% in 1500 to 9.2% in 1700 and 10% in 1800. De Vries however, only considers cities of more than 10,000 inhabitants. When smaller towns are also included, the percentage increase would be less. The decrease from ca. 16% in 1500 to 13% in 1700, mentioned by Hohenberg and Lees, however, is probably a too negative estimate of the trend. (Hohenberg & Lees 1985, pp.7-9)
41 As, for instance, Riga, Malmö, Swansea, Liverpool, Leeds, Eindhoven, Rostock, Berlin, Warszaw, Castellón de la Plana, Monaco, l’Aquila and Sarajevo.
42 These more general studies are: Rausch 1963 (collection of articles on town formation in central Europe in the 12th and 13th century); Beresford 1967 (town foundations in England, Wales and Gascony); Gutkind 1964-1972 (different volumes treating town formation in different parts of Europe through the centuries, the volumes on central and eastern Europe containing particularly much information on newly planned towns from the 12th to 15th centuries); Lavedan & Hugueney 1974 (on town plans, mainly in France); Stobø 1977 (collection of articles on town formation and foundation in central and eastern Europe); Hall 1978 (on town plans in Germany and France); Franchetti-Pardo 1982 (on town planning in the 14th and 15th centuries, mainly in Italy); Huguenet 1986 (on the German Ostkolonisation in central and eastern Europe, with town foundation as part of it); Guidoni 1992 (on town planning in the 13th century, mainly in Italy); Elenf 1992 (on colonisation in Prussia, the Low Countries and southwest France, with town foundation as part of it); Rutte 2002 (on the creation of towns in the Low Countries in the 12th and 13th centuries); Various Authors 2004 (mainly on the German-speaking countries in the 11th to 15th centuries). Apart from these books and collections, one particularly interesting article considering the subject in general is: Schwindt-Jörg 1980 (on new town planning, mainly in the German-speaking countries).
0.2.2 Selection of material and layout of this dissertation

Of course it is impossible to consider all new town foundations in Europe from the 11th to 14th centuries, which number around 1500 at the very least. Therefore, our scope will be limited mainly to the period of the second half of the 13th and first half of the 14th century, short excursions excluded. The intensity of new town foundations reached a high-point at this time, only to be reached again in Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries. (figs. 0.1, 0.2)

In the second half of the 13th and first half of the 14th century, the growth of the economy and of the population was at a high tide, reaching a peak probably at the end of the 13th century. This economic and demographic growth was, of course, the main stimulus to the many town foundations in that period. As mentioned above, the period of strong growth came to an end around the middle of the 14th century, with economic crises and ‘the black death’.

In order to be able to get a more vivid impression of the whole process of the creation of new towns in this period, three regions have been selected from which three groups of towns will be studied closely in part I of this dissertation (ch. 1 to 4). The first region is northern Wales, where the focus will be on the towns that were founded by King Edward I of England in the late 13th century. Second is the region of Aquitaine in southwest France, where town creations from the 12th to the first half of the 14th century are studied, more specifically the towns which are known as bastides, that were founded from c. 1230 to c. 1350 by various lords of different ranks. Third, attention will be directed to the region around the city of Florence in Tuscany, where six towns founded by Florence between 1299 and 1350, known as terre nuove, will be examined closely. (fig. 0.3)

These three regional groups of towns have not been chosen randomly, but are selected for their variety in geographical location within Europe, their variety in form and the variety of founding lords and their motivations. Further, this selection is also based, for the sake of the feasibility of the study, on the availability of relevant literature and sources.

The three groups of towns will be treated in slightly different ways. In the first chapter, the eleven Edwardian town foundations in northern Wales will be examined in detail. In the chapter on southwest France, the view will be much broader, observing the group of the bastides in general and marking their general similarities and differences. In the chapter on the Florentine terre nuove, the focus is on a much smaller region and a relatively small group of just six towns that were planted by the same founder. These differences in treatment have been inspired by both the available primary and secondary sources and by the wish to show different aspects that are relevant for a general view of the creation of new towns in Europe during the high-period of town foundation.

For instance, within the group of newly founded towns in Wales I chose to focus on the boroughs that were founded by King Edward I, since they illustrate so well the role of town foundations in the conquest and colonisation of the country. The material on the Florentine terre nuove, on the other hand, is so rich, and contains so much data concerning subjects on which one is rarely informed elsewhere, that I chose to focus on this limited group instead of treating more newly founded towns in Tuscany.

The chapter on Wales can be regarded as an introduction to the phenomenon of new town creation in the high-period of town foundation, the chapter on southwest France as a broadening of the subject, and the chapter on the terre nuove as a deepening of it. The three chapters follow a similar basic layout, starting with the geographical situation, the preceding history, the founders, their motives and the settlers, and ending with a discussion of the general spatial aspects such as the locations chosen, the urban layout and the architectural elements in the first period after the creation of the towns. Hence, the results of the study of these separate groups will, in part, be comparable and in part complementary.

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43 Actually, one can be sure that many new town foundations are still unknown, since they are not yet identified as such or described in publications.
44 According to Engel, there were about 50 towns in the German-speaking part of the empire in the early 12th century, by halfway through the 13th century another 1,000 had already been promoted or newly founded, and in the following five decades another 2,000 followed. Most towns created since about the end of the 13th century were, however, of small size and minor importance. At the end of the 15th century there were about 3,000-3,500 towns, possibly containing up to 20-25% of the population. (Engel 1993, pp. 37-38) Stooob, considering the larger area between Geneva and Denmark, Brugge and Lithuania, claims that there were about 5,000 towns by the middle of the 15th century. In these lands c. 250 towns were promoted or newly founded every decade between 1240-1300, c. 200 every decade between 1300-1330, and c. 150 every decade between 1330-1370, after which the number of new towns, and the more successful ones, kept falling. Around the third quarter of the 15th century, the absolute number of towns was even falling, because more towns were depopulated or saw their privileges withdrawn than new ones were founded. (Stoob 1979, pp. 157-160) Stooob claims that in the period of 1450-1800 not even half of the number of new town foundations of the period 1250 to 1350 was reached. (Stoob 1956, p. 28) In the British Isles, according to Graham, just under 350 boroughs were promoted or newly founded in the period 1200-1350. (Graham 1988, p. 40)
45 See par. 0.1.2.
46 See par. 0.1.5.
This study is specifically concerned with the spatial layout of the newly founded towns and how it was created. Since this aspect cannot be isolated from the historical process and the environmental situation, one also has to consider the motives for the town foundations, the historical circumstances in which the towns were created and contemporary thought on the town as an architectural structure and a social and political unit. Further, one has to consider the planned functions of the towns, the influence of the form of the landscape, the methods of planning and laying out, the possible influence of specific examples, and the form of the buildings in general. All this will help to understand the original ideas, the realised structures, and the relation between them.

In part II of this study (ch.5 to 9) a number of important aspects of the planning of new towns in the high-period of town foundation will be studied from a thematic point of view, after which a synthesis will be given. The thematic aspects that are treated follow more or less specifically from the material studied in part I. The choice of sites for new towns will be investigated in chapter 5; the methods of plan design (specifically the use of geometry), will be closely studied in chapter 6; in chapter 7 the subject of the persons involved in the planning or design of the towns and their profession will be investigated; and chapter 8 will go into the subject of ideologies concerning the phenomenon of the town and its society at that time. Chapter 9 then, is synthetic in character, containing a reconstruction of the process of town creation as it would generally have taken place, and describing the various elements that usually formed part of the physical form of a new town.

For the study of these themes, the material treated in chapters 1 to 3, on the three clusters of towns, plays the main role, but will be used together with material from other newly created towns elsewhere. This is necessary in order to get a more inclusive general picture of the phenomenon of new town creation in the period, because there are valuable sources elsewhere that give information on aspects that are hardly or not at all covered by the sources regarding the three clusters of towns. Apart from that, one can get additional information about certain significant features and aspects, as they are highlighted by the comparison of different cases from different regions.

Finally, part III of this study (ch.10 and 11) deals with the way that town building of the 11th to 14th centuries has been treated in the historiography of urban creation in the past 150 years or so. More specifically, it deals with some particular problems with this historiography that have been encountered during the research. As in part II, material from different parts of Europe is treated in these chapters.

In chapter 10 the European new town foundations of the period are placed within a wider temporal and geographical perspective. And finally, chapter 11 goes into the traditional perception of the form and forma-
0.2.3 Sources

The information on which this study is based stems from different kinds of sources. A very important source is the form of the towns; after all, the urban form is what this study is mainly about. Apart from the actual urban form as it presently is, depictions of town plans from the 16th to the 21st century and the structures found in archaeological excavations are also very important sources.

In principle, archaeological excavation is the best source of information on the initial phase of new settlements. But since only a very small part of the relevant areas have been excavated and closely investigated, the material from this source is unfortunately still rather limited. Archaeological excavations mostly only deal with small-scale urban areas, since large-scale urban excavation is very expensive. From younger gated, the material from this source is unfortunately still rather limited. Archaeological excavations mostly only deal with small-scale urban areas, since large-scale urban excavation is very expensive. From younger depictions or from the present form of towns it is harder to determine what the situation at the time of urban creation may have been. Obviously, urban structures are subject to change. Towns are extended, houses are rebuilt and enlarged, plots are divided and amalgamated, streets are widened, alleys are built-over, etcetera. Changes in the population, the size of households, the land market, land-use, building techniques and modes of transport have a considerable influence on urban form, not to mention disasters like wars, floods, fires and earthquakes. However, despite the many changes in the course of the centuries, it appears that ancient property boundaries and street patterns often survive for very long periods of time in the urban landscape. This may not apply to foundations that failed or to towns that were so successful that they became the centres of big cities, but most of the other towns that were moderately successful and that were not destroyed irreversibly - almost every town has had a major fire somewhere in its history - have conserved much of their original structure.

The structure of streets is mostly well-preserved. More alterations have been made, generally, to the structure of the individual lots. But still, one finds a considerable amount of continuity there. The original buildings, however, are almost without exception replaced by others of a different form. It appears that the degree of urban durability is more or less in proportion to the number of people that are involved. So, a house is easily changed since it generally involves one owner and the few other people living in it; the amalgamation of plots concerns two or more owners and possibly some tenants, making it somewhat more difficult to accomplish and, thus, less common; but when the course of a street is changed, many properties and people are involved, which makes this phenomenon both quite complex and rare. Archaeological research has shown that urban plans tend to conserve much of their ancient structures, even in places where redevelopment demands have been high, such as in central London. This innate conservatism in town plans is so strong that even major fires or other grand-scale destruction often did not structurally change the framework of plots. The increase in the scale of building projects and the changes made to facilitate automobile traffic in the 20th century have generally been the most important destroyers of ancient urban structures.

Hence, urban structures can be very valuable sources in the attempt to understand the origin and development of towns and cities. They need to be interpreted correctly, however, in order not to confuse later changes with original elements. Methods to interpret historic urban structures have been described by various scholars since the second quarter of the 20th century, and are used throughout this study.

The second category of sources used in this study are contemporary written sources, such as administra-
tive documents and chronicles. As will become all too clear in the following chapters, such written sources giving explicit information about the subject of town planning from before the 15th century are very rare. Where they do exist, the earlier written sources often are quite hard to interpret and they do not give as clear a picture of the subject as those from later centuries often do.

The third important source of information for this study is the modern scholarly literature dealing with history, geography, architecture and archaeology. This literature, together with modern editions of historical written sources, is also the main intermediary from which the ancient written sources are consulted.

0.3 Definitions

0.3.1 Definition of the term ‘town’

The word ‘town’ is, vague as it may be, actually a very suitable term for the settlements under consideration in this study. A far as I know, there is no comparable term, denoting a type of settlement in between a village and a city, in any language other than English.55

For the clarity of the subject of this study it is, however, important to ask: what exactly is a town? Or rather, what is considered to have been a town in the period under consideration? The answer to this question depends on the approach. Traditionally, historians tend to base their definition on institutional features, since they mainly work with written sources, while architectural historians rather look at the architecture and the urban form. Archaeologists, in their turn, look at material culture in a wider sense, whereas geographers often take into closer consideration the elements of economic structure, the demography as well as the physical structure.

About the problem of defining ‘the medieval town’, there has been a long-lasting and wide-ranging discussion, which has, however, not lead to a generally accepted definition. In the course of 150 years or so, scholars of different disciplines have placed the emphasis on different elements in their definitions of the ‘medieval town’: the formation of a juridical sworn community, the grant of burghal rights; the grant of a written borough charter; the possession of a town seal or a mint; a certain amount of self-government; the presence of a market and of traders; the presence of specialised manufacture and services; the functioning as a central place for a hinterland; the presence of town walls or ‘urban architecture’; the number of inhabitants; the area of the settlement; and the presence of a social stratification of the community.56

As a clue to what was thought of as a town and what was not, the terminology found in the original sources - a multitude of terms ranging from villa and mercatus to urbs and civitas - is quite unreliable, since the terms do not appear to have been used consistently and varied from time to time and from region to region.57

Therefore, it is sensible to use a modern definition of the term ‘town’. A good definition is offered by Van Uytven regarding historic towns in the Low Countries: ‘The town is a settlement with central functions, to which it owes its diversified social-economic structure, its relatively dense population and concentration of buildings, and its form and mentality, which differ from that in the surrounding area.’58 An important aspect of the central functions and diversified social-economic structure is that there are relatively many people in a town earning (part of ) their income with work other than in the sectors of agriculture and food production.59 Especially important for this study, being particularly concerned with urban form, is that the central function implies a central position in a transportation network of roads and often also waterways, and that the relatively dense population results in the concentration of buildings, and thereby in a pattern of plots and of access- and traffic-streets, whose density is significantly greater than that of the settlements in the surrounding area.

Since this study is particularly attentive to the planning of the spatial structure of newly founded settlements in the early phase of their existence, it will also deal with some relevant settlements that may have consisted of no more than about 20 burgage-plots or settlements where the inhabitants relied on agriculture

55 In Austria however, there was, and still is, a special status for settlements of limited size with market rights: Märitz (‘markets’). These settlements were clearly lower in the hierarchy of settlement than Städte (‘towns’), but it is not possible to draw a clear line of distinction. (Rausch 1978, pp.15-18; 65-75, 89) On the British Isles the term ‘borough’ is also used, clearly implying a specific judicial situation primarily involving burgage tenure with free possession and inheritance of urban plots, but generally applying to the same settlements as the word ‘town’. (Platt 1976 (1), pp.125-128; see also par.1.2)

56 See, for instance, Pirenne 1956; Ennen 1975; Mumford 1961; Spöberg 1966, pp.13-18; Haase 1960, pp.3-8; Stoor 1970, pp.20-32; Platt 1976 (1), pp.125-142; Hall 1978, pp.31-34; Johannek, Post, Steuer & Innschler 2004. It should be noted that it is the separate legal status which distinguished the towns of Europe from urban settlements elsewhere in the pre-modern world. (Chant & Goodman 1999, pp.156-158)


59 Compare the definition given by Roberts (1996, p.19).
for a large part of their income - Ackerbürgerstädte (‘field-burghers towns’) they are aptly called in German.60 Such settlements do not fit the definition given for the term ‘town’ very well, but from the aspect of their formal planning they are nonetheless relevant. Although the physical structure of the place is generally given most attention in this study - wherefore the most important aspect is that it considers an agglomeration of plots and buildings which is relatively dense in structure - it is also very important in the selection of settlements that their founders meant them to have an urban status, which would generally be most clearly expressed in the planned physical structures as well as in the privileges that were bestowed on the settlements.

The definition of the term ‘town’ given above is, thus, relative to its surroundings. Therefore, one must realise and accept that certain towns treated in the following chapters, such as those in Wales, would have been considered no more than villages in more urbanised regions, such as Lombardy.61 By present-day standards, the towns in the 13th and 14th centuries were generally very small: the great majority of them counted no more than 2,000 souls.62 There are many examples of newly founded towns with just two rows of house lots along both sides of one street, with a total number of, say, 50 lots. Others were, however, planned with high ambitions for considerable numbers of households. Manfredonia in southern Italy and Grenade-sur-Garonne in southwest France, for instance, are both reported to have been planned for 3,000 households, which would amount to about 15,000 people.63

0.3.2 Definition of the term ‘new town’

In the past 150 years or so, the towns of the 11th to 14th centuries have often been presented as either grown from a small core or newly founded. This contrast, however, is much too rigid.64 Most towns were indeed newly founded at a certain moment, in a juridical sense, but, as already mentioned above, in many cases there already was a settlement, whether a castle, abbey, hamlet or village, present on the site. In some cases the previous hamlet or village was demolished to make room for the new foundation, while in others the older settlement was maintained and often enlarged with a new extension. In later phases, further new structures may have been added.65 (see figs.1.6, 1.41, 2.6, 2.44, 2.30, 5.3, 7.3, 9.5, 9.8, 9.15).

Structures that were not planned in one phase have often been called ‘grown’, ‘evolved’ or ‘developed’, and many times the adjective ‘organically’ was added.66 This idea of a town growing as if it were a biological organism is, however, misleading. A town does not just grow by itself: it is made by people, whether as a single planned project within a short period of time, or in different phases over a longer period of time.67 And when people create a town, wilfully or not, by building dwellings in a nucleated settlement, they follow rational thought rather than instinct, which implies planning. Such planning can be complicated, including all possible anticipated elements; or, alternatively, it may be no more than just simply adjusting a new building to its purpose and surroundings.

So, the formulations that one finds in the scholarly literature, with ‘organic towns’ that ‘grow’, often at ‘natural route foci’, should be rejected. As Aston and Bond argue, there are innumerable ‘route foci’ without a town, and in some cases even deliberate attempts to found towns on such sites have failed. It should be noted that the town is a type of settlement that only exists in societies that have achieved a certain level of sophistication. This attests that the town is a fairly complex structure, which is unlikely to develop spontaneously without a certain amount of deliberate creation, planning, promotion or support.68

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60 See, for instance, Keyser 1958, p.26. In chapters 1 to 3 it is noted that many of the new towns treated there initially had a mainly agricultural economy. For the German-speaking lands and the area of the so-called Ornikolonisation, Stoob has described how after the 13th century newly founded towns became smaller and were often equipped with privileges that were modest in comparison with the towns of the 12th and 13th centuries. The size was probably modest because there was no longer economic and demographic space for major new foundations; and the reduction of privileges resulted from the fear of the founders, born from previous experiences, that towns with too much independence could turn against them. Stoob calls these towns respectively Kleinstädte and Minderstädte. (Stoob 1970, pp.33-34, 239-241, 244-245; Haase 1960, pp.5, 9, 39, 105-106, 121, 175)


62 Such small towns of under 2,000 inhabitants made up about 75% of the total number of towns in France around 1330; for Germany the percentage is around 90%; and for Switzerland it must have been about 95%. (Hohenberg & Hutton Less 1985, p.51; see also Stoob 1970, p.153)

63 Valente 1980, p.20; Weyers 1969, p.65. For Grenade-sur-Garonne, see par.2.10.6.


66 See Koller 1978, pp.2-3.

67 Meckeser 1982, p.64; Palliser, Slater & Dennis 2000, p.162. See par.11.1.1.

When one considers the architectural structures of old towns as they appear in the present, the term ‘newly founded town’ is often irrelevant. Since the original foundation, so many changes and additions may have been made that sometimes there barely is a difference between a town that was newly founded in origin, even when it was built from tabula rasa, and a town that acquired the characteristics of a town over a longer period of time. So, considering its layout in the present, a settlement that is known as a newly planned town from, say, the 13th century, may not actually be much different from a town that had a very different origin, as for instance a fishermen’s village from the 11th century, or a Roman military camp. Almost without exception, towns contain elements of planning, which may have been initiated by lords, institutions or governments.

But since the focus in this study is not so much on the town as it has come to us, but on the original creation, primarily in a material but also in a social and institutional sense, the difference is definitely relevant. Some places reached urban status only over a long period of time, acquiring the different elements that belonged to this status one by one; while other towns were planned, starting from a very humble core settlement or only from an idea, to be realised within a limited period of time (although this would mostly have been, say, ten years rather than two months).

An important term that also needs to be explained is the word ‘planning’. Many newly planned towns have regular plan forms. But, as will become clear in the following chapters, not every newly planned town has a very regular plan. And conversely, not every regular structure is necessarily the result of coherent planning: for instance, structures may have been planned in different phases, with the forms of new phases based on the older structures.

In the practice of new town creation there are various aspects or elements that may be planned: among others, elements of judicial, social, economic, military and spatial character may have been planned and coordinated in advance. This study focuses on ‘spatial planning’, which I would like to define as ‘the coordination of spatial elements that are to be newly created’. This ‘spatial planning’ had to include many elements, like access routes, the allotment of private ground, the water drainage, the location and form of buildings, the defensive structures and facilities such as the market space and the provision of fresh water. Not all these elements were necessarily always planned in advance and their layout may not have been very deeply contemplated, since the basic approach often seems to have been rather pragmatic.

Since the spatial structure and its planning is the main subject of this study, towns that were destroyed and newly built up or that were moved to another place will also be given attention in the following chapters. The same goes for a number of coherently planned extensions to older towns, because they contain valuable information about the planning and the realisation of urban ensembles in the 13th and 14th centuries.

### 0.4 Historiography

#### 0.4.1 Historiography and source material

The towns and cities of the 11th to 15th centuries have attracted much attention as a subject of historical study. In the 19th century, the study of the institution of ‘the medieval town’ was passionately taken up by historians, who, for instance a fishermen’s village from the 11th century, or a Roman military camp. In fact, in some cases extensions were actually new towns in themselves, having a separate charter, a separate administration, their own defensive circuit and sometimes even having other lords or other social compositions. For example, communal upheavals and popular uprisings in towns of the 12th to 15th centuries were seen as prefigurations of the revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries, which brought the burgher to a dominant role in politics in Great Britain attention has become focused on discerning different plan units, laid out at different times, in plans of old towns. This is done by methodical plan analysis, especially by looking closely at the size of plots and their relation to one another. (Baker & Slater 1992; Lilley 1995; Lilley 1999)

According to the Swiss scholar Hans Strahm, the term ‘town foundation’ refers to planned settlement within a relatively short period of time. (Strahm 1950, p.404) But in a strict sense, the foundation (fundatio) of a town, according to Strahm, is the providing of an institution with land (fundus) and/or rights as a special privilege. (Strahm 1950, p.389)

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69 Aston and Bond 1976, p.78.
70 An interesting case in question is the town of Ludlow in England, since there has been much study and debate about whether, or in what measure, it may be regarded as a newly founded town. (Conzen 1950; Platt 1976 (1), pp.33-34; Slater 1990) Since the work of Conzen was published (1960; 1968; 1988), it seems that especially in Great Britain attention has become focused on discerning different plan units, laid out at different times, in plans of old towns. This is done by methodical plan analysis, especially by looking closely at the size of plots and their relation to one another. (Baker & Slater 1992; Lilley 1995; Lilley 1999)
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72 Barends 1988, pp.179-180. It is also worthwhile to note that ‘planning’ does not necessarily imply guidance from a higher authority.
the following time.74 The traditional historian’s approach towards ‘the medieval town’ is to see it mainly as an institution. This concentration on the institutional element was mainly due to the historian’s material: written sources. Particularly town charters received considerable attention. Additional material was found in other documents of legal, administrative or ecclesiastical character, which were for the greatest part strongly related to institutions. Besides that, narrative sources like chronicles and descriptive works like laudates urbium and geographies were studied. Thus, the attention of the traditional historian has primarily been concerned with the judicial, administrative, social and economic aspects of historic towns.75 With this fixation on written sources, however, a rather limited and even partly wrong image evolved of ‘the medieval town’.

One of the difficulties, for instance, is that there were settlements that received town charters, which were, in fact, no more than villages in a social, economic and physical sense.76 And conversely, there were many settlements that were urban in many respects, but that did not receive written town charters, or only did so when they had already achieved a really urban status. One problem with this issue is that the shift from oral custom to written law was slowly processing and written town charters only became habitual by about the 14th century.

Another problem is that written sources can be hard to interpret correctly; they may even contain purposely misleading information. For instance, a charter can state that a town is new, when it actually is not, in material sense. Sometimes it has been disregarded that new charters may have been given anew to older towns, for instance if dominion had passed into the hands of a different lord, or if a charter was granted only to a newly added part of an older town.77 Conversely, a written source may claim great antiquity, while the settlement was in fact much younger. For instance, many chroniclers who were in search of the origin of their town followed legend or even invented a foundation, preferably by an important saint, emperor, king or lord, often connecting the foundation to an important event known from history.78

One must keep in mind that written sources are especially suited to adapt the depicted reality to the aspirations of the writer or his patron. However, material sources such as the urban landscape may be harder to interpret than written sources, because they are less likely to be dated by their creator and because most people are not trained in ‘reading’ material sources.

All in all, the result is that historians have traditionally viewed the towns and cities of about the 11th to 15th centuries as institutions, because the urban privileges - for the historian essentially those written down in a charter - made the settlement into an institution. The privileges also made the settlers into a community of burgesses, with special rights and often some form of self-government. This special juridical situation, being different from customary law, is what separated the town community from ‘the rest’. Therefore, historians often tend to see the town as a social phenomenon and an institution, rather than as a material phenomenon.79

The historian’s fixation on town charters has led to various misinterpretations of the nature of ‘the medieval town’. For instance, the traditional historian’s approach has caused a general underestimation of the amount of planning involved in the origins of towns. Many historians tended to see ‘the medieval town’ as an organic body of people living in a concentrated settlement that has slowly come about, grown from a hamlet or a village into a town. For instance, Arthur Bryant wrote in 1953 that ‘[...] every English town, with the possible exception of London, has grown out of a village.’ He could have known better by then already, but more recent research has made it all too clear that this is quite untrue.80 Most of the towns from the 11th to 14th centuries did not simply ‘grow’ into towns; they were intentionally created, or at least promoted, by a lord who had plans of some kind for the development of the land he administered.81 It may be true that many such towns were founded in places with some sort of settlement already in situ, but that does not change the fact that the formation involved deliberate planning, in a social, economic, juridical, administrative, and mostly also spatial, sense.

Another major misinterpretation, also resulting from the traditional historian’s fixation on town char-

77 Strahm 1950, pp.387-388.
78 Strahm 1950, pp.387-388, 391. In the preambles of town charters it is sometimes claimed that towns were founded by a Roman emperor or by Charlemagne, while actually they are much younger.
79 See Aston & Bond 1976, p.17.
ters, has led to the image of ‘the medieval town’ as ‘an island in the sea of feudality’. Mainly in the 19th century, historians created an image of ‘the medieval town’ as a free haven for merchants and for serfs that previously were cruelly suppressed by the feudal lords of the land. ‘The medieval town’ was often seen as a more or less autonomous and democratic community of traders and labourers that was opposed to the old feudal society. Many historians in the 19th century sought a precedent for the then new democratic bourgeois state in ‘the medieval town’. Later on, Marxist historians also thought they could recognise a precedent for their communist ideal there. The reality, however, was generally very different. In fact, most of the towns were dominated by members of the old feudal ruling class, who used them as a new vehicle towards the old goal of exercising power. Most towns were founded by feudal lords, whether of high or low status, and formed an integral part of the world that was dominated by these lords. Also, many members of the nobility lived in towns and cities and owned large amounts of land there. In some towns this was reflected in the urban form, as when members of the nobility built residences and towers that dominated over the houses of the normal burghers, or where larger plots were reserved for the nobility. (see fig. 9.11)

Connected with the traditional view of ‘the medieval town’ as being principally anti-feudal, is the idea of a basic antithesis between town and country. It is true that with its special privileges, its distinct social structure and political organisation, and its spatial definition (often marked by a circuit of defences), the town clearly distinguished itself from its rural surroundings. The contrast, however, has been overemphasised in the traditional historiography. In fact, the town and the countryside existed in mutual interdependence: the urban settlement needed the country for the production of food and raw materials, and the country needed the town as a market and as a centre for the production of special commodities and services. In the old antithetical view the town was populated by free merchants and craftsmen, whereas the country was populated by farmers and agricultural labourers who were largely unfree. Although this may be true in a very broad sense, it is definitely not a general rule. Town residents could also be unfree, and many urban dwellers were engaged in growing agricultural products, within or without the confines of the town.

What most historians - art historians, historical geographers and archaeologists included - do, is try to find what they are looking for in history. For instance, liberal historians tended to see the community of traders as the origin of the institution of ‘the medieval town’, whereas Marxists regarded the artisan as the original element of the urban community. The consequence of this was that Marxist historians were more interested in material sources, since the lower classes are generally under-represented in the written sources. This is an example of how the kind of source material that we study may influence our general image of the historic town and vice versa. Therefore, historians, archaeologists, art historians and historical geographers might get very different impressions of the same town. Hence, they should always try to check their conclusions with those of their colleagues from other disciplines, and if there appear to be relevant differences, they must try to explain them.

In the following chapters I will also try to do this, but the main source for this study is the urban form itself. This dissertation primarily deals with the spatial aspect of the town foundations of the 13th and 14th centuries. Its main interest lies in the original landscape of the newly founded towns, and on how it came about and how it got its specific form. In this, thorough analysis of urban form, from the present town or by way of modern or old plans, generally is the best source of knowledge. The amount of planning and related questions are much easier read from the old urban layouts than from ancient documents, since these documents generally do not go into this subject. But apart from the fact that the material world of architecture

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82 Graham 1988, p.38.
83 Heers 1990, pp.203-495. Skill adhering to the old image, for instance are: Egli 1962 (vol.2), p.11; Divonne 1993, pp.52, 68; Lazzareschi 1994, p.16.
84 Heers 1990, p.203; Vercauteren 1968, p.16.
86 See par.9.11.
87 With this distinction, however, the town was not cut off from its surroundings, but rather became its focal point, through which the region communicated with the wider world, and especially with other urban centres.
88 See Franchetti-Pando 1982, pp.9-11.
90 Platt 1976 (1), p.13; Böttner & Meißner 1983, p.21; Kaspar 1990, pp.639-630; Heers 1990, p.231. It should also be noted, since the fact has often been omitted, that not only burgesses lived in towns: there also were other residents, free as well as unfree, wealthy as well as poor, and often from a different ethnicity, as for instance Jews. (Dollinger 1986, p.275; Pitz 1991, pp.295-200)
91 Vercauteren 1968, p.16.
0.4.2 Typological classification

From the literature on urban layout and urban planning in the period of about the 12th to 14th centuries it appears that many of the scholars who have looked at the subject in a context which is wider than one town, have drawn up classifications of town plans into morphological types.94 Mostly, however, they did not explain what the goal of their classifications was. It remains unclear, therefore, whether they were meant for overview only, or to explain historical relations, or whether they were meant as reconstructions of typologies that actually existed in the minds of the erstwhile town planners.

Typologies of plan forms are also made for towns of other periods, but, specifically with regard to the newly planned towns of about the 12th to 14th centuries, typological classification seems often to have become a goal in itself, not explicitly serving a further goal. For instance, in The Landscape of Towns by Aston and Bond the history of urban settlement is treated from prehistory to the future, but for some unexplained reason it is only for ‘the medieval period’ that they discern between different types based on plan form. For other periods they discriminate between different functions – like spa towns, port towns and mining towns – but for ‘the middle ages’ they find it useful to order towns under the following headings: open triangular or irregular market places; defended castle boroughs; undefended linear plan; grid plan; unique plans; and composite plans.95

Presumably it was the large number of new towns with more or less comparable plans from this period, in combination with the scarcity of historical information on their creation, which has led to the urge to classify ‘medieval’ towns according to their plan forms. With regard to the bastides of southwest France, for instance, various scholars have drawn up plan typologies, seemingly just because there are so many of them.96

It appears, however, that this typological approach barely leads to results that have any meaning for the understanding of historical urban form and its creation.97 In fact, it often distracts from the individual cases and from questions of actual historical relevance. The great attention to typological classification creates the inherent danger that the types become of more importance to the student than the actual towns themselves, and towns that do not fit well into the typology tend to be disregarded.98

Connected to the typological approach of urban form in the high-period of town foundation, is the idea that certain types of plans or plan-elements of existing towns and cities were consciously reproduced in newly founded ones.99 Many scholars have more or less implicitly assumed that the different types of plans that can be discerned were also distinguished by the planners, who could choose from a range of plan types for their projects.100 Accordingly, theories have been proposed about founders or families of founders that willingly chose to create new towns in one specific type only, such as the Zähringer and the Stauffer in

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93 See pars.8.5.1, 8.5.2.
94 Typologies of town plans, especially of ‘medieval towns’, were created by, among others, Meurer (S.D., c.1910-20, towns in Germany c.11th–15th century); Brinckmann (1920, western European towns, mainly 12th to 14th century); Hoenig (1921, newly founded ‘German’ towns in Bohemia, c.12th–14th century); Kloss (1947, Dutch towns 12th–13th centuries); Nice (1947, towns with grid plans in Tuscany); Dickinson (1951, western European towns); Tricart (1954, towns in general); Egli (1962, ‘medieval’ towns); Hofer (1965, Swiss new towns, 12th–14th centuries); Morini (1965, mainly Italian towns); Butler (1976, planted towns on the British isles, 1066-14th century); Aston & Bond (1976, pp.86-96, English and Welsh towns, c.11th–14th centuries); Bradley (1985, Anglo-norman plantations in Ireland); Roberts (1987, villages in England); Hofrichter (1990, towns in general); Lazzareschi (1994, mainly Italian towns of the 11th to 14th centuries); and Harck (1995, newly founded towns of the 11th–14th centuries in Denmark and Schleswig). Typologies of bastide plans are treated in par.2.10.3.2.
95 Aston & Bond 1976, pp.86-96. From these headings it already appears that this classification is not very consistent, logical or complete. In the different types, elements of very different character and value are used side by side as classificatory determinants. Therefore, this classification is not logical, and it can be questioned whether it is indeed useful for scholarly analysis.
96 See par.2.10.3.2.
98 Another objection is that the typological classifications based on the forms of the town plans often are not very logical. A useful classification ought to cover a whole spectrum, distinction being made on the basis of the same aspect, different types being clearly discerned from one another. In my opinion, this is not the case with most of the town plan typologies that have been made. (see, for instance, n.95 above and par.2.10.3.2)
99 The possibility that similar solutions were reached in different places independent from each other, is rarely considered in the scholarly literature on the subject, even though such convergence is often far from unlikely because of the similarity of motives, functions, locations, social contexts and architectural traditions.
100 For instance, Friedman 1988, pp.81-116. The general idea is that there were professional town planners that had a wide knowledge of different models and plan types. In some cases, for example, scholars claim that a specific plan type appears often in a specific region because it would have been the work of one planner or school of planners (Meckseper 1991, pp.65-66), and in other cases the planners’ hypothetical knowledge of foreign models is presented to explain similarities between different towns at a great distance from each other (Keller 1979, pp.134-142; Conzen 1988, pp.267-288; Friedman 1988, pp.90-116; Slater 1990, p.77; Guidoni 1992 (II), pp.97-173). As will be discussed in ch.7, however, there are no concrete indications that inform us of the existence of such professional town planners.
modern southwestern Germany and Switzerland. It appears, however, that the supposed clear direct correlation between founders and plan types is largely an illusion, being the product of a selective overview and questionable attributions to founders. As far as I know, the Florentine terre nuove, which will be studied in chapter 3, form the only group of towns with a clear correlation between the founder and the sort of plan.

In the literature up to about the mid-20th century, different types of plans have also been connected to specific ethnic or national origins. It is quite clear, however, that these ideas are largely incorrect and were often instigated by misplaced nationalistic feelings. It appears that typologies of town plans of the period under consideration can only be useful to provide an overview - to the extent that they are consistent and logical at all - and should not be taken for historical realities. Hence, the typological approach will not be followed in this study.

103 See par.3.9.
104 For instance, settlements with more or less circular outlines have been characterised as typically Celtic, Germanic and Slavic, and the regular orthogonal plan has been claimed to be typically French, English, German and Slavic. (Lavedan & Hugueney 1974, pp.6-10) See also Dzewonski 1960; Morelowski 1960; Francastel 1960; Münch 1962; Kuhl 1968; Gutkind 1964, pp.65-70; Higounet 1986, pp.15-94.